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I’m Filipina and bilingual, but not “that kind” of bilingual: A LangCritAutoethnography

Christine Montecillo Leider

Abstract

While much research addresses teachers’ language ideologies, especially as the relate to racialized multilingual learners, much less is known about the language ideologies of racialized multilingual learners, in particular how they may come to learn and unlearn different ideas about language and bilingualism—ideas that are often informed by white supremacy. In an attempt to process (e.g., grapple with and heal from) this internalization of white supremacy and to make that process visible, the author introduces developmental unlearning, a process for making sense of one’s own experiences with and relationships to language over time, and LangCritAutoethnography (LACE), an a new autoethnographic method that blends LangCrit with Critical autoethnography. Drawing on childhood memories, the author illustrates how the iterative process of recounting and (re)interpreting lived experiences through a socio- political, cultural, and historical lens, or LACEing, can be a systematic and healing process for developmental unlearning of racialized ideas about language, bilingualism, and identity.

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As an education researcher, and more specifically as a scholar of multilingualism and bilingual education, I am interested in understanding the language ideologies, or beliefs about language (Kroskrity, 2015; Rosa & Burdick, 2017; Razfar, 2012), of teachers who work with racialized multilingual learners[1]. Much research, including my own, has documented how teachers prescribe to ideas of (white, standard) English

[1] I use racialized multilingual learners to refer to those who use named languages (e.g., Spanish, Tagalog, Arabic, Japanese) and/or language varieties (e.g., Spanglish, Black English, Creoles, Argentina Spanish, Singapore English) in their life. Racialized multilingual learners can include classified English learners, reclassified English learners, never classified English learners, heritage speakers of racialized languages, and those who may not identify as multilingual but have a cultural or ethnic affiliation with multiple named languages or language varieties.

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hegemony (Dobbs & Leider, 2025; Baker-Bell, 2020; Garrity et al., 2019) and hold negative views toward multilingual learners (e.g., Dobbs et al, 2022; Lucas et al., 2015; Pettit, 2011). And much of the work in teacher education has focused on ways to disrupt problematic and inaccurate beliefs (e.g., Dobbs & Leider, 2021; Busch, 2017; Leider et al., 2025; Prasad, 2018) where, unsurprisingly, because of the current teaching profession demographics (NCES, 2021), much of this research is focused on white[2] teachers. While there is certainly a need to better understand the potential to shift negative and inaccurate racialized language ideologies (e.g., Phillips-Galloway et al., 2025; Van Gorp et al., 2023), in this paper I use LangCrit (Crump, 2014) and critical autoethnography (Boylorn & Orbe, 2020; Hughes & Pennington, 2016) to center the idea that racial justice work in multilingual education must also include better understanding the language ideologies of racialized multilinguals themselves, in particular how they/we may come to learn and unlearn different ideas about language and bilingualism.

My Positionality: From Alaska to the Academy

I am a proud Filipina American who was born and raised in Ketchikan, a fishing town in Alaska that is home to the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian tribal groups (Ketchikan Story Project, 2016). Ketchikan is also home to several immigrants and descendants of immigrants from the Philippines: due to the large salmon canning industry many Filipinos migrated to Ketchikan looking for work (Melendy, 1974; Paik et al., 2016; Schulze-Oechtering, 2021). I'm also someone who was raised in a multilingual, immigrant family (my parents use English in addition to other Filipino languages) and had the privilege of growing up in a strong Filipino community where our elders instilled what they perceived to be important Filipino culture and values. I am very grateful for that cultural upbringing, and it has deeply shaped the way I think about community and relationality today. However, in my own family and many others, maintaining and learning our Filipino languages was not something our elders impressed upon us, a common trend among many second-generation immigrants at that time (Alba et al., 2002; Portes & Schauffler, 1994).

While being Filipina is undoubtedly a core part of my identity, I admit that my childhood and adolescent experiences with Filipino/Filipino American languages are not memories I had really given much thought to until the past decade or so. In fact, the very notion of language ideologies and how racialized multilinguals are positioned in education—a major component of my own research agenda (Dobbs & Leider, 2021, 2025; Leider et al., 2024, 2025)—and how that might relate to my own beliefs and practices is a relatively new (and, admittedly, sometimes uncomfortable) area of

[2] While APA style calls for race to be capitalized, I use lowercase for white as an attempt to reinforce the need to decenter whiteness in academic scholarship.

inquiry for me. To understand this though, it is important to know a bit about my path to the academy.

As a teacher I observed several practices that never felt quite "right" such as a white parent assuming I was the Chinese language teacher or my schools' strict English-only classroom policies—these actions never fully sat well with me, but I didn't really know why, so I went to graduate school with a naïve notion that I could then "prove" that these sort of practices were "wrong." When I went on to graduate school and began to read the work of bell hooks, Paolo Freire, Patricia Hill Collins, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Gloria Anzaldúa, Sonia Nieto, Stacy Lee, Audre Lorde, and many other Critical[3] scholars, a whole new way of viewing the world was opened to me and I started to develop a new language for explaining education and the experiences of students and teachers within it. In many ways this was liberating, and I began to form an understanding of racial justice for multilingual education that primarily centered on working with white teachers to develop culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy (Lucas et al., 2008, Lucas & Villegas, 2013). I must admit, while doing this sort of social justice work in teacher education is not an easy task, it is "easy" in the sense that from this perspective I, myself, am not part of the problem. Afterall, the majority of teachers in the US workforce are white and monolingual and so it didn't seem all that wild to position myself as "outside" of the problem because I was not a white teacher with problematic beliefs about racialized multilinguals; rather, I was a teacher of color who had experienced and observed racialized harm from both well-intentioned and outright racist white teachers.

It was impossible, though, to continue to challenge pre- and in- service teachers to consider their racial and linguistic biases without more deeply reflecting on my own– and as both a duoethnographer (see: Dobbs & Leider, 2023; Leider & Dobbs, 2022, 2024) and someone who engages in Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP) (Loughran et al., 2007; for my own work see: Dobbs et al., 2022; Leider et al., 2025) it was inevitable that my own experiences with linguicism and racism, including ways I have perpetuated these very ideas, would come to surface.

The Shame and Guilt of Recognizing Internalized White Supremacy

As a teacher I was aware of problematic statements about racialized multilingual learners, though I never fully had the language to explain why I thought they were wrong. Now, as an academic, I have a whole academic literacy toolbox for examining and explaining the world of education through a Critical lens including conscientização (Freire, 1974), critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2013), critical race theory

[3] Here—and in other places in this paper—I intentionally capitalize the "C" Critical to refer to thinking, pedagogy, and practices that deliberately take into account issues of power, equity, and antiracism in education and society (see: Muhammad, 2020).

(Delgado & Stefancic, 1998), duoethnography (Norris et al., 2013), empire (Motha, 2014), just to name a few. Through my work in teacher education and education research, it became inevitable that the more I began to understand and address the relationship between beliefs and practices, memories where a colleague harmed one of our students or one of my own teachers harmed me would resurface. As these memories would surface, I often wrote them down, initially with the goal of creating a sort of "log" of examples that I could use in teacher education work. Throughout my duoethnographic work (e.g., Dobbs & Leider, 2023, in review; Leider & Dobbs, 2022; Nguyen & Leider, in review), these memories became artifacts for discussion. Through this cycle of iterative processing—journaling about a memory, sharing that memory with students, unpacking that memory with peers—different memories, in particular memories of how my own beliefs might have resulted in harmful practices toward others also came to the forefront. As uncomfortable as it was, I also wrote these memories down, a process that felt shameful because while I had developed the skillset for processing experiences where harm had been inflicted on me, I did not have the tools for processing this retroactive guilt I experienced in realizing my own complicity. In many ways I felt like an imposter: here I was realizing that I was culpable of the same issues that I was trying to address in my work as a teacher educator and education researcher. This paper is an attempt for me to both process my internalization of white supremacy and to make that process visible so that, perhaps, others might also have a tool to go through this painful, but also healing process of "developmental unlearning" (an idea I thank my friend, and longtime duoethnography partner, Dr. Christina Dobbs for helping me put into words).

Developmental Unlearning

I love learning, I always have. When I was in middle school, learning Spanish was exciting and later in college I enjoyed being introduced to developmental theory in my psychology classes. So, it's unsurprising I absolutely loved being a graduate student where my life revolved around learning new ideas and perspectives for understanding the world of education. As a doctoral student I was particularly interested in learning more about Paulo Freire's ideas. Pedagogy of the Oppressed was required reading in a history of education course and I was fascinated to learn about the "banking model" of education, or the idea that education is essentially a process of teachers "depositing" knowledge into students where that knowledge might include explicit fundamental components of American curriculum such as World War II as well as implicit ideas like American patriotism through the daily recital of the pledge of allegiance. A key component of the banking model perspective is that this knowledge goes unquestioned by both the depositors and the recipients, essentially a "it is what it is" mentality. Freire's corresponding ideas of conscientização, or critical consciousness, is the idea of developing the skills to question what we've historically treated as "the way things are" such as standard, (white) grammatically correct American English

being the "best" way to use English and the expected language in school (even though I do not ever recall being explicitly told this). The idea of the banking model and critical consciousness was my first foray in wondering if ideas or ways I had learned might not be fully correct or should be done differently. Though it wasn't until several years later that I understood this process as "unlearning" or what Kumashiro (2000a, 200b) has described as, often uncomfortably, questioning what we've always accepted as "normal." Instead of just learning about American linguistic hierarchies that position white, standard English at the top, I now realized I also had to unlearn the idea that English varieties do not belong in schools. The unlearning process, however, did not stop there. Over time I began to realize that unlearning white standard English hierarchies wasn't just about questioning what was "normal," but there's a discomfort I also needed to process (Kumashiro, 2001). And the unlearning journey has not ended there, as the more I remember (i.e., my memories) and the more I learn (e.g., new ideas that I read about or generate with others through dialogue), the deeper my unlearning becomes. This cyclical process of returning again and again to ideas that have been unlearned with new considerations and understanding is what I view as developmental unlearning.

LangCritAutoEthnography: An Iterative Process for Developmental Unlearning

LangCrit was proposed by Alison Crump (2014) as a "critical theory of language and race that challenges fixed assumptions related to categories such as language, identity, and race, and argues that these categories are socially and locally constructed" and argues that "fixity plays a role in shaping identity possibilities, in setting the tone for becoming" (p. 220). In other words, LangCrit takes a both/and approach to understanding identity where there is an assumption that both a) race and language (and culture, nationality, gender, etc.) are intertwined and fluid and b) there is a reciprocal relationship between personal experience and broader socio-political, cultural, and historical perspectives. I am drawn to LangCrit because of its explicit emphasis on the connections between "individual practices" and larger systems that have been shaped by society, policy, history, etc. Specifically, LangCrit acknowledges the following four tenets (see, Crump, 2014):

1. Racism is a real part of everyday society;
2. Socially constructed and negotiated hierarchies and boundaries among social categories such as language, identity, and race constitute a continuum of possibilities from fixed to fluid;
3. The intersectionality of different dimensions of identity;
4. Local language practices and individual stories are connected to broader social, political, and historical practices and discourse through nested relationships that are woven together through webs of social relations.

These tenets are an ideal lens to examine "the kind of bilingual" that I have been positioned as throughout various stages of my life. Indeed, it would be impossible (or at least entirely inaccurate) for me, as a language education scholar, to try and make sense of my lived experiences as a languager (i.e., one who uses language, see García, 2018; Leider & Proctor, 2204) without considering my relationship to other languagers and then, of course, our experiences and beliefs as they relate to broader socio- political, cultural, and historical perspectives around named languages. Further, as my developmental unlearning process gets deeper and deeper, the more I unpack dimensions of my identity and its connection to the social world around me. Thus, I use critical autoethnography which Reed-Danahay (2017) describes as a form of writing that "places the self of the research and/or narrator within a social context" (p. 56) where scholars use their lives as data to blend personal and professional experiences (Marx, 2017; Marx et al., 2017; Starfield, 2019). Specifically, I borrow from Yazan's (2019) approach of using critical autoethnography as a way to "problematize the role of ideologies in constructing identity" (p. 50) to make sense of my "in-between identities" (Canagarajah, 2012, p. 261) as a languager with a complex relationship to multiple named languages and their corresponding varieties. Further, because LangCrit makes it implicit that racism is a regular part of everyday life, I must recognize my own complicity in everyday linguicism and "acknowledge the inevitable privileges we experience alongside marginalization and to take responsibility for our subjective lenses through reflexivity" (Boylorn,2014, p. 15). Thus, I propose LangCritAutoethnography as the process of critical self-study where I aim to understand my current identity as a languager by examining my lived experiences and perspectives through LangCrit where I explicitly acknowledge the socio- political, cultural, historical forces that shaped them. Inspired by memoirs that highlight the complex relationship between language and identity (e.g., Alegría Hudes, 2021; Mabute-Louie, 2025; Vargas, 2018), critical autoethnographies (e.g., Boylorn, 2014; Marx, 2017; Thomas, 2018), and the fact that critical autoethnography is recognized as a "blurred genre" (Holman Jones, 2005, p. 765) for re-creating dialogue and inner dialogue (Adams & Holman Jones, 2018) the remainder of this manuscript weaves together my own memory and contemporary research in language and education. In essence, I conceptualize LangCritAutoethnography as:

A "blurred genre" process that provides a reflective, flexible method ***for developmental unlearning*** *where personal vignettes and contemporary research are laced together with language and education to make sense of experiences as a racialized multilingual through socio- political, cultural, and historical perspectives.*

I use developmental unlearning to emphasize the fact that this is an iterative process where I take new learning (e.g., research, theory) to make sense of previous experiences which, in turn, help me unlearn longstanding internalized ideas–and this unlearning can then give me an even deeper understanding of previous experiences

and so forth. Similar to how lace can refer to the process of interweaving cord and the interwoven cord itself, I propose LangCritAutoethnography (or LACE), as both a verb and noun, where the verb refers to the internal act of doing developmental unlearning and the noun is a shared project that makes this process visible. Thus, I encompasses both the process of LangCritAutoethnography (to LACE) where I aim to understand my own experience and understanding of what it means to be a racialized languager as well as a LangCritAutoethnography that makes this process of developmental unlearning visible through first-person vignettes where I recount and interpret a key linguistic memory through the lens of contemporary research and Critical theory. By LACEing together memory, research, and theory these vignettes also serve as a sort of code-meshing (Canagarajah, 2011; Young & Martínez, 2011) that both showcases the "inner dialogue" of my own thoughts and ideas in reaction to linguistic experiences and makes the process of unlearning visible to others.

This process also embodies what Holman Jones (2016) describes as the "ongoing, movement-driven process" (p. 299) of theorizing in critical autoethnography. Thus, in this LangCritAutoethnography, because I intentionally want to unpack my own linguicism and racism, I selected memories that surface again and again as I teach about the relationship between racialization and language–memories that have haunted me.

"That Kind of Bilingual" is a Product of the System

My kindergarten teacher told my parents that using Tagalog and Bisaya, the languages my parents speak, would be detrimental to learning to read English. While my parents listened to the advice to move toward English-only, for a brief period of time, as a child, I was interested in learning their languages. But, thanks to internalized and reinforced ideas of English hegemony and white supremacy (Tsuda, 2017), that desire dissipated over time, with a growing preference–and pride–for English. Eventually I studied Spanish in high school, majored in Spanish in college, studied abroad in both Spain and Mexico, and then lived (and taught) in Argentina. So, I consider myself bilingual, but not necessarily "the kind of bilingual" people might assume me to be. Sure, I have decent receptive skills when it comes to Filipino languages, my vocabulary is relatively expansive, and I do have some ways of understanding and seeing the world that are informed by ideas that can really only be captured through Filipino language (e.g., kapwa, mahal kita) but in a pragmatic "language skill" sense I don't know that I could (or should) list Tagalog or Bisaya on my CV. My desire to be a Filipino who was "fully bilingual" resurfaced early in graduate school when I began to feel like an "inadequate" Filipino, especially as I learned more about the research on identity and language. This feeling grew stronger as I would sometimes bump into Filipinos on public transportation and they would immediately begin speaking to me in Tagalog. To use the words of Jonathan Rosa

(2019), I "looked" like a language and I was feeling like a walking disappointment for not being able to "sound" like a Filipino. I now know that I'm not inadequate and while I can't carry on a solid conversation in the named languages of Tagalog and Bisaya that doesn't mean I'm "less" of a Filipino. Rather, I am a product of a larger education system and socio- political and historical discourse (Crump, 2014) that prioritizes a banking system of education (Freire, 1974) that includes English assimilation.

While I know this now—and this tension and disconnect between beliefs and practice is well examined in the literature—that doesn't negate the shame or anger that I have experienced at myself for not knowing Filipino languages in the way that I sometimes think I "should". I've only recently been able to move beyond these more present-day feelings of self-judgement by grappling with previous experiences where I've realized that I, myself, am part of this system.

Proximity to (Grammatically) Correct American English

I grew up in a strong Filipino American community and many of my friends were 1.5 generation and second-generation immigrants (see: Rumbaut, 1994, 2004) with parents and/or grandparents who immigrated to Ketchikan from the Philippines. Like many other immigrant origin children, at the time many of us did not maintain our parents' and grandparents' heritage languages (Portes & Hao, 2002) and I was observant enough to notice a divide in how my teachers treated those of us who spoke English "well" and our Filipino peers who were considered "Limited English Proficient" (LEP) (though now I wonder how much of the idea of LEP was really just a need for academic literacy development in English as opposed to developing "proficiency" in the English language). I excelled at school and while I was not aware of it at the time, there was clear academic tracking that began in middle school. I was the only Filipina who was tracked in what might be referred to as the "high achievers" and it was not lost on me that the way I used English at school was more aligned with the way my "high achiever" peers used English with their families than the way my dad used English. Whether intentional or not, my teachers solidified an association of "academic achievement" to being a good user of English who used fancy vocabulary and correct grammar, a practice that remains today (Metz & Knight, 2021). My middle school science teacher, for instance, would intentionally have "grammar mistakes" in the notes we would have to copy into our science notebooks and if we were the first to spot the "error," we would receive bonus points (I prided myself on almost always being the student who found the error first). I internalized this idea that it wasn't just American English that was "better," but it was standard, white, grammatically correct American English that really mattered. My dad may have instilled English hegemony, but it was the banking model (Freire, 1974) of my American schooling that reinforced a very particular brand of linguistic hierarchy where white standard American English sits at the top (Alim & Smitherman, 2020). And because I had observed my own

parents criticize our extended family for how they used English ("they speak with an accent") I was, ironically, nervous that my friends might think less of my family, and by extension of me, if they overheard my family, in particular my dad, speak "incorrectly."

This fear, combined with a desire to be seen as smart by teachers and "accepted" by my peers lead me to engage in a practice of constantly policing my dad's pronoun usage. "It's she, not he! It's embarrassing when you say it wrong!" was just one of many phrases I said often as a child and adolescent. Though I only ever said the first part, "It's she, not he" out loud as I would never directly tell my dad I was embarrassed, so much as try to correct him to prevent future embarrassment. It never occurred to me until much later in life to consider why my dad would even mix up pronouns in the first place, instead, because of my internalized misunderstanding of "good" English being associated with intelligence, sadly a belief that remains constant today among many teachers (Faltis and Valdés, 2016; Graue, 2005), I genuinely thought my dad didn't understand the difference between "she" and "he." In reality my dad's "incorrect" usage of English pronouns was not because he didn't know the difference between genders, but in Tagalog and many other Filipino languages the third person pronoun, siya, is used for all people (Cruz, 2023); in other words, third person pronouns are not gendered in the same way as English. Looking back, it is quite ironic to consider how this adolescent practice of policing my dad's English was rooted in his commitment to prioritizing English assimilation during my childhood.

The Origins of Hegemonic Internalization

My Filipino vocabulary wasn't/isn't exactly the greatest, as my vocabulary is mostly limited to everyday life activities, but my parents have always mixed English and Tagalog and Bisaya and so even as a young child I was a pretty competent translanguager (Otheguy et al, 2015; Wei, 2018) often using sentences that were primarily in English with an organic sprinkling in of Filipino words (e.g., "Mom, I'm so busog[4]."). One time in the Philippines, one of my older cousins, my kuya, asked me if I wanted something to drink and I responded by asking for tubig. My cousin laughed at me and repeated tubig in the same enunciation that I had used, teasing me. I had placed the emphasis in the wrong part of the word and "mispronouncing" tubig became a joke among my cousins. I hated it. I now know that my "mistake" was just my own particular brand of languaging (Leider & Proctor, 2024) and my cousins knew

[4] I have intentionally made the decision to not adhere to the common practice of italicizing the "non-English" language, nor do I provide the English translation to words and phrases that occur in this paper. My decision to do this serves as an attempt to both decenter the English language and present my writing in the way same way that I language: an organic blend of named languages and language varieties.

what I meant, so in many ways, if we think about the primary goal of languaging to be effectively communicating to another person, then I was successful, even if I had in fact mispronounced the word tubig. As an eight-year-old, though, I did not know this and instead felt shame and embarrassment, so I asked my dad to teach me Tagalog.

My father thought this request was silly, telling me, "You don't need to learn that because we are American and English is better." I internalized this idea of English hegemony (Tsuda, 2017) to mean that because I knew English more than my cousins, I was "better" than them. In some ways that felt validating because it meant I wasn't "less." And in other ways it didn't feel quite right as I did genuinely want to have the same language as my cousins because I felt like I didn't fully belong all the time when I was around them, even if, as my dad said, I was "better." I, of course, didn't know at the time that my dad's whole "English is better" attitude was rooted and informed in American colonization (Nadeau, 2020; Tupas, 2024) and socioeconomic power relations (Spolsky, 2004). In other words, his favoring of (American) English assimilation[5] and becoming "Americanized" (De Houwer, 2009; Sevinç, 2022) were individual practices that were a product of the larger political and historical practices (Crump, 2014) related to language and power in the Philippines. Nonetheless, this interaction solidified the idea of linguistic hierarchies (Crump, 2014) where I began to internalize the notion of American English being an important component of intellect. And throughout my childhood and youth this idea was further reinforced by seemingly well-intentioned comments from both my Filipino elders, "She's so smart and doesn't have a [Filipino] accent!," and by my white English language arts teachers who constantly policed grammar, "your day is going well," subtle hints, that were clearly laced with elitism and linguicism, about the importance of Americanization and English. Because of my childhood embarrassment of mispronouncing the word tubig (that being only one of several times I attempted to use Bisaya or Tagalog with my cousins), I made a concerted effort not to make an equivalent mistake when speaking English back in the States.

LangCritAutoethnography-ing, or LACEing, the system

I have a distinct memory of going to the grocery store and as we walked through the parking lot, my dad said, "Look at all those doves," when pointing to a flock of birds. I quickly responded, "No, those are called pigeons. Don't you know what birds those are? Those are pigeons. They aren't doves. They are not the same." There was literally no one around us and I was embarrassed he was calling a flock of pigeons doves by mistake. In my understanding of the world, doves were beautiful white birds

[5] While my focus in this paper is mostly on white, standard American English, it is worth noting that similar to the United States, there also exists a range of Filipino English varieties (see: Tupas, 2004, 2024).

associated with weddings or magic tricks and pigeons were ugly grey birds that ate food scraps on the street. And, as a middle schooler, nothing could be more embarrassing than someone overhearing my dad mistake the two. Even with no witnesses around, proximity to "bad" or "incorrect" English was something I was intent on avoiding. Years later, in high school Spanish class, I learned the word paloma, which could be used for both dove and pigeon. In contrast to my dad, my mom was a 1.5 generation immigrant who had moved to the US as a teenager, did not speak English with an "accent," and had a stronger command of English vocabulary; she also was very particular about grammatical correctness, an idea I now think derives back to her own assimilation into American English as an adolescent. So, upon learning about the dual usage of paloma I asked my mom if she knew if that was also the same in Tagalog. I now understand that my dad's use of dove is not only his own way of translanguaging but also the way he understood the world: doves and pigeons are the same thing to him because kalapati can be used to describe both doves and pigeons (and I've recently learned that pigeons and doves are part of the same family known as Columbidae). Now, I'm ashamed to admit here that upon learning about the dual meaning for kalapti my teenage self never apologized to my father for my pigeon outburst. And, I'm also embarrassed to say, that this was not the only time I corrected my dad's English, but doing this LangCritAutoethnography, literally LACEing my experiences in writing, has helped me understand that all these actions and emotions I've shared in this manuscript are not isolated feelings or experiences, but part of a larger system (Crump, 2014)—a system that, unfortunately, is not broken. The very fact that it took me nearly 40 years to even recognize my own complicity in perpetuating the system (Boylorn & Orbe, 2020) is evidence that the education system of white supremacy is alive and well.

That said, the growing body of social and racially just oriented scholarship in general (see Critical handbooks in education, for overviews: Apple & Gandin, 2009; Darder et al., 2023; Lynn & Dixson, 2013; Matias, 2021) and more specifically in language and literacy education (e.g., Aguilera & Pandya, 2021; Deroo & Ponzio, 2023; Dobbs & Leider, 2025; Phillips-Galloway, 2023; Ryan & Wilde, 2024; Wong et al., 2024) are evidence that there are also many people—children, youth, parents, teachers, scholars–that are attempting to disrupt the system, or at least parts of it, in various ways. With LangCritAutoethnography I attempt, not necessarily to break the system, but in recognizing my relationship to and also my complicity within the larger socio-, political, cultural, and historical system I hope to LACE more criticality into the very system that has shaped me with the hope that the system might have to change because of my presence within it. If racism and linguicism are an everyday part of society and if we are all part of a "web of relations" (Crump, 2014), then no matter how much I learn and unlearn, I cannot fully undo the racialized harm I have

experienced myself or inflicted on others. I can, though, recognize that the acts I've experienced and been a part of are part of a larger system. And I can disagree with the system, but I can't ever fully divorce myself from the system because those experiences are laced into my own being in the same way the effects of colonization are laced into education (Garcia-Olp, 2018; Patel, 2015). If we are all part of the very system that we are aiming to disrupt then I think this means we need to both recognize our own complicity within the system and also make a way to heal within the system.

As I've gone through the iterative process of developmental unlearning, I've relived so many memories—some painful, some sad—that have resulted in guilt, shame, and anger. The more I wrote these memories down and shared them with others, the more I became hungry for a place to digest these experiences, especially because it's quite complicated to see how intertwined you have been in the same system that you hate for teaching you the ideas that you're trying to unlearn. My friend Christina Dobbs always says, if it doesn't exist, then we should write it—and we should do it the way we want to do it. That's what LangCritAutoethnography is for me: I blended a framework that I've used to make sense of the world with a method I've used to make sense of my place within this world that I've been trying to understand. In doing this, I've simultaneously processed my experiences with language and bilingualism (i.e., LACEing, a verb) as I've written this paper about developmental learning (i.e., LACE, a noun).

I close with an invitation to my racialized multilingual peers: I believe, whether you realize it or not, that many of us have already been, in our own ways, LACEing the system–our very presence as teachers, teacher educators, and education researching in the predominantly white field of education is a disruption. I propose LangCritAuthoethnography as a systematic way for us to center ourselves within the system while also providing a space for us to heal and process. So to my racialized multilinguals pamilya, I invite you to use LangCritAutoethnography, or your own variation of it to use the system (i.e., research, theory, writing) to make sense of our place within the system and then LACE our sensemaking back in the system in the same way the literal act of LACEing can alter and change the existing structure.

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