

Raciolinguistic policy assemblages and white supremacy in teacher education

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Abstract

Raciolinguistic ideologies are sets of beliefs about language which perceive racialised communities as displaying linguistic deficiencies which require remediation. These ideologies are tethered to European colonialism and white supremacist logics which have long been normalised and actively written into teacher education policy in England. In this article I argue that raciolinguistic ideologies are integral to the contemporary, state-crafted policy assemblage that pre-service teachers and teacher educators must navigate, including the Teachers' Standards, the Core Content Framework and various documents produced by Ofsted, the schools inspectorate. I argue that this policy assemblage represents a form of hostile governance which is attempting to derail and curtail anti-racist efforts. I show how raciolinguistic ideologies surface under guises of career advancement, pedagogical excellence, scientific objectivity, research validity and social justice. These guises operate to coerce pre-service teachers and teacher educators to reproduce raciolinguistic ideologies in their own practice, reduce professional agency and place responsibility on low-income and racialised communities to modify their language towards idealised whiteness. The article ends with some proposals for how teacher educators might find cracks in this oppressive system, in locating spaces for resistance which seek to undo harmful and colonial ideologies about language in the struggle against white supremacy.

Keywords

raciolinguistic ideologies, white supremacy, teacher education, language policy, England, Ofsted

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Fear, disinformation, and the maintenance of linguistic racism in schools

In July 2020, Black members of the US-based Conference on College Composition and Communication published a set of demands concerning linguistic justice in schools and calling for a radical reimagining of teacher education. It read:

We DEMAND that:

1. teachers stop using academic language and standard English as the accepted communicative norm, which reflects White Mainstream English!
2. teachers stop teaching Black students to code-switch! Instead, we must teach Black students about anti-Black linguistic racism and white linguistic supremacy!
3. political discussions and praxis center Black Language as teacher-researcher activism for classrooms and communities!
4. teachers develop and teach Black Linguistic Consciousness that works to decolonize the mind (and/or) language, unlearn white supremacy, and unravel anti-Black linguistic racism!
5. Black dispositions are centered in the research and teaching of Black Language!

(Baker-Bell et al 2020)

These demands were contextualised within the global socioeconomic and political climate of the time: a pandemic which disproportionately infected and killed Black communities, #BlackLivesMatter protests in response to police murders of Black people, and a growing right-wing attack on anti-racism work following Donald Trump's executive orders to ban the use of critical race theory in schools (The White House 2020). As critical teacher educators across the world praised Baker-Bell et al's demands,

conservative commentators and education policy makers in the UK dismissed, denounced and tried to discredit them. Melanie Phillips, writing in *The Times* described it as the ‘complaining’ work of ‘race radicals’ and claimed that it was white people who faced greater pressure to modify their language, and that speaking in ‘correct grammar’ was the key to social justice (Phillips 2020). Around the same time, my own work critiquing carceral pedagogies rooted in white supremacist language ideologies (Cushing 2021) was characterised as ‘lunacy’ by the right-wing commentator Calvin Robinson in *The Telegraph*, who claimed such positions were ‘lowering expectations’ for racially minoritised children (Robinson 2020). And in February 2022, the UK Department for Education issued new guidance for schools on political impartiality, including the requirement to teach about racism, empire and colonialism in a ‘balanced manner’ (DfE 2022a). These distortions of anti-racist and decolonial work in England have a long history (e.g. Sivanandan 1990), stoking fear and spreading disinformation about the relationship between language, race and power through intimidatory tactics.

This article calls for teacher educators in England to show solidarity with Baker-Bell and her colleagues. It considers how ideologies about language in the contemporary teacher education policy assemblage can work as a manifestation of anti-Blackness which upholds educational structures built on white supremacy (Aronson & Meyers 2022; Dumas 2016). I show how ideologies about language are central to the maintenance of racial hierarchies under benevolent guises of career advancement, pedagogical excellence, scientific objectivity, research validity and social justice. This critique is offered through the framework of raciolinguistics (Flores & Rosa 2015), which seeks to uncover how race and language have been co-constructed amidst the legacies of European colonialism, and how racialised speakers are framed as deficient, regardless of how they use language, in being compared against the normative language practices of idealised whiteness. My critique comes from my privileged position as a white, able-bodied, English speaking male who has institutional power as a tenured academic in a European university¹. As Tanner (2019) argues, it is for people like me to help expose the relationship between language, teacher education and whiteness. As a white person, I am implicated within the machinery of white supremacy, and it is from the inside of this machine that I seek to dismantle it.

Raciolinguistic ideologies, white supremacy and teacher education

Raciolinguistic ideologies are durable beliefs about language which maintain systems of white supremacy by perceiving racialised speakers’ language practices as deficient, lacking, and sub-human. These beliefs circulate even when such racialised speakers engage in language practices which are considered normative when produced by powerful white speakers (Rosa & Flores 2017). Raciolinguistic ideologies are tethered to the logics of European colonialism and the enslavement of Black people, where colonisers and slave traders deployed dehumanising discourses about the language of indigenous communities to justify colonial oppression, occupation, and genocide (Mignolo 2000). These ideologies of linguistic and biological purity have long circulated in schools, reproduced through policies, curricula, assessments and pedagogies which privilege idealised whiteness whilst framing the language practices of racialised communities as unsuitable for school and requiring intervention (e.g. Aggarwal 2016; Souto-Manning 2021). One way of interrogating raciolinguistic ideologies is by taking what Rosa and Flores (2017) describe as a raciolinguistic perspective, an analytical shift away from the stigmatised speaker and towards the practices of the white perceiving subject. The white perceiving subject is an ideological position which can be taken up by any individual or policy actor, regardless of their racial and class identity. This is not simply about individual modes of perception however, but about how institutions, policies, assessments, and other technologies of linguistic surveillance can be complicit in the reproduction of raciolinguistic ideologies. For instance, Khan’s (2018) work has shown how language tests for racialised immigrants operate as a mechanism of raciolinguistic surveillance which bolster Islamophobic narratives, whilst Cushing & Snell (2022) show how the schools inspectorate in England have long reproduced raciolinguistic ideologies in their inspections of schools by perceiving racialised and low-income speakers as displaying linguistic deficiencies which is symptomatic of low-quality educational provision.

¹ I capitalise the *B* in Black/Blackness and use lower-case *w* for white/whiteness. My choice here is made because capitalising the *w* in white/whiteness risks following grammatical tactics deployed by white supremacists.

A raciolinguistic perspective considers white supremacy and anti-Blackness as a normalised tenet of Western schooling (e.g. Carter Andrews et al 2021; Kroskirty 2021; Seltzer & de los Ríos 2018) and an endemic organising structure of teacher education in England and the USA (e.g. Aronson & Meyers 2022; Lander 2014; Picower 2009). Recent work, especially from Black teacher educators in the USA (e.g. Baker-Bell 2020a; Croom 2020; Johnson 2022; Lyiscott et al 2018; Sealey-Ruiz & Greene 2015), has exposed how raciolinguistic ideologies are woven by design into teacher education policy assemblages in terms of curricula, assessments and pedagogical materials. Johnson (2022), for example, explores the central role that raciolinguistic ideologies play in the production of anti-Black violence. His typology captures *physical violence* (such as abuse and assault related to racial discrimination); *symbolic violence* (such as rejecting or misreading the experiences of racialised bodies); *linguistic violence* (such as policing the language practices of racialised speakers); *curricular and pedagogical violence* (such as centring texts produced by white authors and reproducing celebratory versions of colonial histories), and *systemic school violence* (such as discipline policies which disproportionately punish and incarcerate racialised communities). Johnson's typology can be neatly mapped onto state-level teacher education policy in contemporary England. This includes denying writers of colour a space on the curriculum (Iffath 2020); the Islamophobic state surveillance of 'British Values' in curricula (Crawford 2017); Ofsted's² hostile policing of the language of racialised speakers (Cushing & Snell 2022) and the state-sanctioned normalisation of racist, overly punitive, and exclusionary behaviour policies (Bei et al 2021).

Long histories of linguistic racism in teacher education in England

Critiques of teacher education policy and practice in England have long shown how it can work to uphold white supremacy. Lander's (2014) historical account describes how regimes of whiteness have been crafted by successive Conservative and Labour governments whilst simultaneously curtailing academic autonomy through the centralisation of teacher education curricula and the ramping up of external surveillance mechanisms. She shows how the increasing state control of teacher education provision since the late 1970s is concurrent with a decreasing level of attention to issues of racism and racialisation in teacher education policy, resulting in fewer opportunities for pre-service teachers to adequately engage with race beyond simplistic activities which conceptualise racism as a nefarious acts of individual name calling as opposed to state-crafted structures.

These reduced opportunities have also come to affect pre-service teachers' critical awareness of language. In the late 1960s through to the early 1980s especially, pre-service teachers had ample opportunities to explore language, race and power, such as through engaging with genuine grassroots magazines including *Radical Education*, *Roots*, *Hard Cheese*, *Socialism and Education*, *English & Media Magazine*, *Libertarian Education*, *Rank and File* and *Teaching London Kids*³. These publications adopted explicitly anti-racist stances and resisted increasing displays of anti-immigration discourses, such as those espoused by Enoch Powell in his 1968 'Rivers of Blood' speech (Powell 1968). This era was also a broadly productive time for critical language policy work, such as the Inner London Educational Authority Oracy Project between 1971-1977, the 1975 Bullock Report *A Language for Life*, and the 1977 European Communities Directive on the Education of Children of Migrant Workers. As Margaret Thatcher's government took increasing control of teacher education in England in the late 1970s however, opportunities for pre-service teachers to explore language and race were actively discouraged and discredited. Thatcher was critical of the 1980-1984 Linguistic Minorities Project and personally intervened in the publication of the 1989 Cox Report, editing it to emphasise the importance of standard English (see Cox 1991: 257-8). Her successor, John Major, banned the publication of the Language in the National Curriculum (LINC)⁴ materials on the grounds that they paid too much attention to language, power, and race and not enough attention to grammatical correctness. Major himself decried the so-called 'progressive' practices of teacher educators at the time, claiming that

² Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. Ofsted carry out inspections of all state-funded schools and teacher education providers in England.

³ Thank you to Barbara Bleiman and Chris Searle who allowed me to look at their personal collections of these magazines as part of this research.

⁴ LINC was in-service teacher education programme funded by the government between 1989-1992 for around £21 million, led by academic linguists and designed to assist teachers in developing critical knowledge about language, variation, and power.

teachers should ‘learn to teach children how to read, not waste their time on the politics of race, gender and class’, and that ‘standard English grammar’ should form a central part of all teacher education curricula (Major 1992). From a raciolinguistic perspective, these acts of state censorship are efforts to uphold white supremacy and silence voices which challenge the whiteness of the curriculum. Despite a rhetoric of inclusion, diversity and social justice, Labour’s tenure from 1997-2010 maintained these raciolinguistic ideologies and upheld race/class-driven exclusionary tactics, such as the introduction of language assessments as part of citizenship tests and the failure to design a national curriculum which adequately included aspects of race, racism and racialisation (see Tomlinson 2005).

Since 2010 and the significant changes to teacher education initiated by the Coalition and Conservative government, these raciolinguistic ideologies remain firmly in place. Furthermore, they have become increasingly difficult to challenge under hostile state architectures of academic surveillance which punish institutions if they are deemed to not adhere to government prescribed curricula and pedagogies. Post-2010, as outlined in the white paper *The Importance of Teaching* (DfE 2010), the state granted increased political and financial power to school-based teacher education, taking it away from universities and reducing opportunities for pre-service teachers to engage with critical issues in relation to language. In the white paper, discourses about ‘correct grammar’ and ‘tough discipline’ are tied together in ways which have long characterised state-level ideologies about language, giving schools and Ofsted greater powers to police both the speech and the bodies of young people (see Cushing 2021). The nationwide civil uprisings of August 2011 following years of austerity and sparked by the police murder of Mark Duggan in London were seized on by the state as an ideal opportunity to justify support for these changes to teacher education even further. The state used these uprisings to craft a narrative which blamed low-income and racialised families for their apparent failures – rather than years of punitive welfare reform which harmed the lives of those most in need (Elliot-Cooper 2021). As part of this narrative, Black youths living in poverty were (re)framed as a threat and a failure, deemed to require fixing through remedial-based interventions which sought to increase their capacity in so-called ‘academic’ and ‘formal’ language. As this article will argue, the state has increasingly assigned teacher educators as responsible for fixing these perceived defects in language. At the same time, local authority funding for racially minoritised students, including those labelled as using ‘English as an Additional Language’ (EAL) has been eroded. Whereas schools previously had access to resources under the 1999 Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant, this funding was no longer ring-fenced as a result of post-2010 policy changes (although see Tikly et al 2005 for a discussion of how this funding simply posed a linguistic solution to a structural problem). Ofsted, too, have been granted additional powers by the state to surveil the language practices of pre-service teachers and the degrees to which teacher education providers are complicit in reproducing curricula underpinned by raciolinguistic ideologies (Cushing & Snell 2022). In the contemporary teacher education landscape in England then, opportunities for pre-service teachers to engage with critical issues of language, race and power have been gradually replaced with the requirement to engage with mechanistic and depoliticised models of grammar, vocabulary and reading instruction. This kind of knowledge about language is favoured by the state because it attempts to create a generation of teachers who lack critical knowledge about language and have few opportunities to engage with the relationship between language, identity, power, class and race.

Unearthing raciolinguistic ideologies in the policy assemblage

In the sections that follow I adopt a raciolinguistic perspective to interrogate the underlying assumptions about race and language in the contemporary state-level teacher education policy assemblage in England. By ‘contemporary’ I refer to policies introduced as part of post-2010 reforms, with a particular focus on changes within the last two to three years given that this has seen major changes to teacher education policy. I also show how contemporary policy is tethered to the past, taking a genealogical stance which pays attention to ideological continuities over time and how historical formations of race and language continue to inform the present in terms of the policing of difference and deviance (see Heller & McElhinny 2017; Melamed 2011; Stoler 1995).

For the purposes of this article, teacher education policy is conceptualised as existing in an assemblage. A policy assemblage approach aims to understand how policies and their different components ‘move, mutate and manifest in particular spaces and times, in a context of intense transnational flows of policy ideas and practices’ (Savage 2020: 320). This involves exploring how

heterogenous policies are gathered under a (raciolinguistic) ideological assemblage, tracing policy actors, phrases and citation trajectories to see how ideas about language circulate and become normalised. One of the key tenets of a policy assemblage approach is in paying close attention to power, politics and agency, in how policy components create governable subjects and coercive conditions, and how power flows in polycentric ways. This is especially pertinent given the ways in which teacher educators in England have been subjected to a recent spate of hostile policy components designed to deprofessionalise, disempower and intimidate. This includes the introduction of new inspection frameworks (Ofsted 2021), professional standards for teachers (DfE 2011), prescriptive state-designed curricula for teacher education providers (DfE 2019), and requirements for institutions to apply to the government to maintain their status as providers of teacher education programmes (DfE 2021a). An overview of the components of the policy assemblage examined for this research is shown in Table 1.

Component	Year	Author	Summary
Teachers' Standards	2011	DfE	A set of professional standards and expectations that all pre- and in-service teachers are required to demonstrate compliance with. Teacher educators and school-based mentors are expected to monitor compliance with the standards.
Core Content Framework	2019	DfE	A document mandating the 'minimum entitlement' for the national pre-service teacher education curriculum. Ofsted monitor teacher education providers' complicity with the Core Content Framework.
Review of teacher education curricula	2019	Perry et al.	A literature review commissioned by Ofsted and carried out by academics at Sheffield Hallam University. The review informed the development of Ofsted's 2021 inspection framework.
Inspection framework of initial teacher education	2021	Ofsted	A document which sets out Ofsted's principles and methodologies for the inspection of teacher education providers.
Initial teacher education compliance criteria	2021	DfE	A document outlining the mandatory criteria that teacher education providers must adhere to in relation to recruitment procedures, school-based placements and assessment.

Table 1: The contemporary teacher education policy assemblage

These were selected because they were deemed to represent some of the most powerful components of the policy assemblage, especially in the ways that they place teacher educators under additional state surveillance and have the potential to coerce teacher educators into modifying their own curricula under threats of a damaging Ofsted inspection and institutional deaccreditation. Across these policy components, I looked closely at how pre-service teachers and teacher educators were positioned as language policy actors who were expected by the state to reproduce raciolinguistic ideologies in their own practices, and conform to the linguistic patterns of idealised whiteness determined by the white perceiving subject.

Standards and surveillance

I begin by discussing the place of standardised English within the teacher education policy assemblage, and how this is used by the state as a means of upholding white supremacy and anti-Blackness. Within a raciolinguistic framework, standardised English is conceptualised as a social and colonial construct which is built on the production of idealised, hegemonic whiteness in opposition to racialised others (Flores 2016; Kroskrity 2021). Kroskrity (2021: 183) documents how standardised English is central to

white supremacist logics because it ‘simultaneously elevates the variety of white middle and upper classes while lowering any alternative forms of speaking associated with other groups’. Because standardised English has historically been framed in teacher education policy as integral to a successful career and high-quality pedagogies, any language which is deemed to be non-standardised, especially when used by racialised speakers, is framed as deviant and in need of policing. This policing of language is part of a broader architecture of surveillance in which racialised communities have long been criminalised – particularly for those racialised as Black (Browne 2015), and particularly true in schools (Joseph-Salisbury 2020).

All pre-service teacher education programmes in England are legally obliged to follow a set of state designed criteria to remain compliant, with failure to do so carrying the threat of deaccreditation. Racialised perceptions of language are integral to this compliance. Pre-service teachers have their language assessed and policed as part of their application to a teacher education programme, in lesson observations as part of their school placement experiences, in university presentations, in their final portfolios, and as part of job applications. The state operates as a white perceiving subject throughout this entire trajectory, instrumentalised as a policy component which sets out instructions which teacher education providers must adhere to if they are to remain compliant (DfE 2021b). As part of what the DfE call the ‘intellectual and academic capabilities’ that all teachers are required to demonstrate, it is stated that:

Speaking, listening and communicating are fundamental to a teacher’s role. Teachers should use standard English grammar, clear pronunciation and vocabulary relevant to the situation to convey instructions, questions, information, concepts and ideas with clarity. (DfE 2021b)

Policy here places the responsibility on the speaker to modify their language practices in line with the expectations of the white perceiving subject, and so works as a sonic border control mechanism for entry into the teacher profession. Once they have gained entry to a teacher education programme, pre-service teachers have their speech further scrutinised via the Teachers’ Standards (DfE 2011). This is a set of state designed professional benchmarks for pre-service teachers against which their progression on a teacher education course is monitored by school-based mentors and university-based teacher educators. Only those that are deemed to have met the standards are categorised as a legitimate professional and granted a teaching qualification. Since their inception as a policy mechanism under Thatcher’s government in 1983, the standards have been consistent in their reproduction of raciolinguistic ideologies about the quality, articulacy, grammaticality and correctness of speech. The requirement that teachers use standardised English has remained a central aspect of this, through both Conservative and Labour designed policies which have placed an increasing emphasis on technicist notions of linguistic performance whilst gradually erasing any references to social justice and race equality. Consequently, whiteness is centred as the normative standard for pre-service teachers, in terms of identity, pedagogy and language (Lander 2014; Smith 2013). Whilst state-designed professional standards for teachers only came into formal existence in 1983, teachers have always faced pressure to modify their language practices towards idealised whiteness – with a perceived failure to do so representing an indicator of unacceptable pedagogy, professional incompetency and illegitimate personhood. For example, popular textbooks for pre-service teachers in the 1800s, such as those by John Gill and Robert Robinson, instructed teachers to discipline the tongues of themselves and their students:

Among the points requiring notice are the children’s answers, their fulness and correctness, both in style and pronunciation; their distinctness, and if without boisterousness. Especially the teacher’s own style will come under review. Whether his language is simple, correct, precise, and pure, containing no unusual words, involved or long sentences, nor slang phrases; and noticing also his fluency, distinctness of enunciation, and pitch; and generally, whether the lesson is conducted without undue noise. (Gill 1863: 203)

In the current version of the standards, teachers must ‘demonstrate an understanding of and take responsibility for promoting high standards of literacy, articulacy and the correct use of standard English’ (DfE 2011: 10-11). A raciolinguistic perspective interprets this clause as an instance of state crafted sonic surveillance which enforces white supremacy, where teachers have a professional duty to

audibly reproduce idealised whiteness, and that it is the role of teacher educators and school-based mentors to police this. However, a raciolinguistic perspective also shows that regardless of what they do with their language, racialised speakers are still heard as deficient by the white perceiving subject – because ideologies about language are never just about language but index a cluster of judgements concerning personhood, biological purity and professional legitimacy.

These racialised modes of perception were evident in interviews⁵ I ran with Black pre-service teachers (see Cushing f.c), where they described how the Teachers' Standards are used by white school-based mentors as a justifying mechanism for the hostile policing of speech. One of these pre-service teachers was Mariatu, who reported experiences of sonic surveillance in being instructed by her mentor to 'speak much clearer' and 'always use standard English when speaking' because she was perceived to be in audible breach of the Teachers' Standards. Even though Mariatu described her own speech as broadly in line with standardised English, her mentor refused to sign her final paperwork off until it was deemed that she had modified her speech to, in Mariatu's words, 'sound even more like the white teachers'. Mariatu's case highlights the fact that as part of raciolinguistic ideologies, the production of language by racialised speakers will never be perceived as fully appropriate. Furthermore, and as evidence of raciolinguistic double standards at work, Mariatu also described how the same mentor had never made comments about the language practices of a white pre-service teacher, despite this teacher using nonstandardised patterns extensively in her speech. The Teachers' Standards are a prime example then, of a policy enacted by the white perceiving subject to both justify and normalise raciolinguistic ideologies in practice. The policing of language as legitimised by this part of the policy assemblage continues to place the burden on racialised populations to modify their speech, despite those evaluations of speech continuing to perceive and categorise racialised speakers as deficient.

The white ears of Ofsted: colonial legacies and the schools inspectorate

The sub-title of this section is an intertextual reference to Cushing & Snell (2022), where we analysed thousands of school inspection reports to show how the schools inspectorate has operated as an embodiment of the white perceiving subject since their foundation in 1839, and that this is a normalised part of their institutional culture. The schools inspectorate have a majority white and economically privileged workforce (Ofsted 2020) and play a powerful, agentive role in the teacher education policy assemblage, given that they inspect teacher education providers and enact judgements on what constitutes high-quality language education. Other work (e.g. Nightingale 2020) has shown how Ofsted's recent policy moves are anchored in anti-Black and deficit-based ideologies of marginalised families and their supposed failures to prepare their children for school. A large part of these supposed failures relates to language, such as the perception from Ofsted that racially marginalised and low-income children do not use enough words or the right kind of words, and that this poses a limit to what they can do in school (Spielman 2018).

Although Ofsted's subscription to raciolinguistic ideologies underpins much of their current policies, the inspectorate's work on teacher education has a much longer and colonial history. This includes the inspection of teacher education provision in many former British colonies. Raciolinguistic ideologies were a fundamental organising logic of this work, with the inspectorate acting as agents of British linguistic imperialism who sought to erase the use of indigenous languages in schools by replacing them with English-only instruction. For example, Fletcher (1982: 283-284) cites recommendations from the inspectorate that their work in colonised settings centers on 'diffusing a correct knowledge of the English language among all ranks of the people' and that 'all teachers to ensure that children always made their wants known in English'. My own archival work of colonial inspection reports⁶ revealed similar ideologies, such as in a 1953 report on teacher education in East and Central Africa, where it was recommended that

a policy should be followed which leads to the eventual elimination of Swahili from, all schools where it is taught as a lingua franca. [...] In Kenya, a policy of gradual elimination over the whole territory could be followed. [...] The training of teachers in the vernacular only should be

⁵ Ethical clearance was granted for these interviews and all names are anonymised. See Cushing (f.c) for the complete details about this process.

⁶ These reports are held in the National Archives in Kew, London.

stopped and great attention given in all training colleges to the study of English so that all future teachers emerge qualified to teach English in the schools. (Nuffield Foundation and Colonial Office 1953: 84)

Whilst the inspectorate's colonial work on teacher education was geared around policies of linguistic eradication and erasure then, these practices continue to underpin Ofsted's contemporary work in England, with intimidating judgements about language particularly reserved for institutions serving working class and racially minoritised pre-service teachers. Bradford College, for example, a teacher education provider in the North of England with a community of largely South Asian students from low-income backgrounds, has repeatedly received hostile comments from Ofsted about the purportedly defective language of its students and staff, especially in relation to the perceived absence of correct, clear and accurate speech. For instance, in three consecutive reports of Bradford College the inspectorate claimed that:

The training does not ensure that all trainees can use standard English consistently [...]. A small number of undergraduate trainees do not model accurate standard English in their teaching. (2006)

This point for improvement identified at the last inspection, however, remains an issue because there are too many trainees on the course who make errors in their written and/or spoken standard English. (2010)

A small minority of trainees do not use standard English when they speak. [...] During training sessions, subject tutors do not insist on the correct use of English when trainees are sharing their thoughts with the group. (2017)

The 2018 report suggests that management at Bradford College had modified their language policies under the coercive and relentless pressure from Ofsted and implemented a policy which appeared to be geared around the strict policing of speech. Ofsted's positive response to this drew ideological links between idealised whiteness, professionalism and standardised language practices:

During the inspection, the vast majority of trainees used standard English as a matter of course. This is because of intense support for those requiring it, and a much-raised profile, leading to higher expectations from all staff. (2018)

It is crucial to emphasise that these raciolinguistic ideologies from Ofsted exist not just in individual reports of teacher education providers, but are actively written into their broader policy architecture under a guise of research-informed practice and academic robustness. For instance, in 2019 Ofsted commissioned a literature review of teacher education curricula (Perry et al 2019), the result of which was a report disproportionately focused on academic knowledge production from countries of geopolitical and financial power in the Global North. The literature review draws almost entirely from countries who perform highly in PISA tests, who produce large volumes of education research, and who have largely Anglophone education systems (England, Australia, Canada and the USA, the Netherlands, Singapore and Finland). The only use of the word 'language' in the review is in reference to Singapore's national teacher education curriculum, referencing two content areas which are rooted in colonial practices of accent-reduction: *Practical Pronunciation for Teachers* and *Communication Skills for Teachers*. These areas of curricula content reproduce raciolinguistic ideologies which reify the so-called 'native speaker' as a model of idealised pronunciation and place the responsibility on teachers to adapt their language practices in line with this – much like the Teachers' Standards in England do. Native-speakerism is a racist ideology which has nothing to do about empirical linguistic reality and everything to do about who constitutes a biologically and linguistically acceptable person (Holliday 2006). The Singapore programme, which is uncritically presented in Ofsted's research review, instructs teachers on how to be 'good models of the target variety of spoken English'; how their pronunciation may 'impact his/her ability to deliver disciplinary content effectively'; and to 'see the importance of speaking with accurate pronunciation'. Singapore was a British colony for 144 years, and its teacher education

curricula continues to be resonant with colonial logics which perpetuate notions of racial hierarchies and ‘unequal Englishes’ (see Tupas 2019). Such ideologies within Singaporean teacher education are part of a wider national movement in the form of the ‘Speak Good English Movement’, a state-crafted language policy which encourages teachers to modify their language towards ‘correct standard English’ to enjoy career advancement and avoid professional embarrassment. These ideologies and policies of linguistic shaming run on the same logics employed by the inspectorate in England, as illustrated in the discussion of Bradford College earlier.

Ofsted’s literature review on teacher education curricula is lacking in its discussion of race and racism (neither word appears a single time), with uncritical references to influential north American men (notably Doug Lemov and E.D Hirsch) whose work reproduces patriarchal, pathological and white supremacist ideologies about the language practices of low-income communities of colour (see also Cushing 2021; Souto-Manning et al 2022). Lemov’s *Teach Like a Champion* pedagogy, widely critiqued for its reproduction of anti-Black epistemologies, is actively endorsed by the Department for Education, whilst Hirsch is the de facto architect of the 2014 national curriculum in England. Hirsch’s (1987) model of *Cultural Literacy* – a manifesto for what he calls the teaching of ‘intellectual capital’ in schools and on teacher education programmes – is rooted in colonial logics of language and nation building, especially in terms of constructs such as academic language, standardised English and the native speaker. And just as the inspectorate argued for monolingualism to be the norm in their colonial work, Hirsch frames multilingualism as a threat to the ‘national literate culture’ of north America (1987: 93) and something that ‘enormously increases cultural fragmentation, civil antagonism, illiteracy and economic-technological ineffectualness (1987: 92). Hirsch’s work is also prominent in Ofsted’s (2022) so-called research review on English in schools, especially in terms of the ‘word gap’, a raciolinguistic construct which frames the vocabulary size and quality of low-income, racialised children as deficient (see Cushing 2022; Johnson & Johnson 2021). I explore these discourses of vocabulary deficit and impoverishment in greater detail in the following section.

When the resulting draft and full inspection frameworks did arrive (Ofsted 2021), they were roundly rejected by subject associations (such as the National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum) on the grounds that they assumed a monolingual society which framed linguistic pluralism as a cognitive disadvantage in need of fixing. In this way then, Ofsted’s contemporary work on teacher education can be seen as a continuation of their colonial activities which actively seeks to suppress language practices which are deemed to be deviant from educational spaces. As Quijano (2000) writes, coloniality lives on through the active and hostile epistemic suppression of non-European knowledge and language, working to further institutionalise hierarchies of racialised identities. This section has shown how the inspectorate have long been central to the construction of these hierarchies and play a key role in reproducing and normalising raciolinguistic ideologies in the teacher education policy assemblage.

The Core Content Framework and the (re)normalisation of deficit discourses

One of the most significant components in the new teacher education policy assemblage in England is the Core Content Framework (CCF), which sets out the ‘minimum entitlement of all trainee teachers’ (DfE 2019: 3) and is used by Ofsted in their inspections of teacher education curricula. Produced by the Department for Education in consultation with eight academics, school leaders and senior managers of school-based teacher education programmes, the CCF relies on crude overtones of a ‘what works’ approach to curriculum building which overlooks critical questions such as what works for who, and who gets to decide what counts as what is working (see Biesta 2007; Silova et al 2020)⁷. The CCF has significant power as a policy document because it is used by Ofsted as a yardstick for measuring

⁷ The ‘what works’ agenda in England’s education landscape has regained popularity in the last decade through discourses of ‘evidence-based practice’, favoured by major funding bodies such as the Education Endowment Foundation and mobilised by organisations such as Ofsted, the DfE and ResearchED. My criticism here is not that teachers should possess knowledge of educational research, but of how the ‘what works’ agenda offers narrow, linguistic solutions for a host of structural inequalities under guises of scientific objectivity and robustness. ‘What works’ research tends to focus on corrective-driven interventions targeted at minute technical issues whilst overlooking broader structural issues, and consequently absolves the state of their own responsibilities in enacting structural change.

‘quality’ in teacher education, and so teacher education providers are coerced into modifying their own curricula if they are to satisfy the inspectorate and avoid the risk of a damaging inspection report and professional reputation.

In this section I focus on how the CCF reproduces raciolinguistic ideologies through its deficit framings of language, in which marginalised children’s language practices are perceived as lacking and that school is a place where these shortcomings can be fixed – especially when such solutions are grounded in the reproduction of idealised whiteness (see Lewis 1966). These discourses of blame and deficit in England’s education policy have a long history, especially since mass migration patterns following the second world war and renewed ideas from academics in the 1960-70s that low-income families suffered from ‘verbal deprivation’, ‘limited grammar’ and ‘restricted codes’ (Bereiter & Engelmann 1966; Bernstein 1973). For example, in 1965 the UK government issued new directives to schools that they should ‘disperse’ immigrant children across different schools to reassure white, middle-class parents that their own children’s progress was ‘not being restricted by the undue preoccupation of the teaching staff with the linguistic and other difficulties of immigrant children’ (DES 1965: 5). Deficit and pathological perspectives about language have seen a resurgence in England’s education policy since 2010 under recycled guises of scientific objectivity, research validity and social justice (see Cushing 2022), and here I focus on how the CCF subscribes to these logics as part of the contemporary raciolinguistic teacher education policy assemblage.

In a section of the CCF called ‘Subject and Curriculum’, teacher educators are instructed that their curricula must include opportunities for pre-service teachers to develop the literacy capabilities of children. This includes:

- Teaching unfamiliar vocabulary explicitly and planning for pupils to be repeatedly exposed to high-utility and high-frequency vocabulary in what is taught.
- Modelling and requiring high-quality oral language, recognising that spoken language underpins the development of reading and writing (e.g. requiring pupils to respond to questions in full sentences, making use of relevant technical vocabulary). (DfE 2019: 15)

‘Literacy’ is framed here as an autonomous and technicist project which exists separately from social context, culture, politics, and power (Souto-Manning 2021). It is underpinned by a US/Euro-centric (and by extension, white-centric) idea of what counts as ill/iterate (Smith et al 2019) whilst reproducing deficit discourses in its failure to recognise what all children can already do with their language. For example, the assumption in the CCF is that linguistic constructs such as ‘high-utility vocabulary’, ‘technical vocabulary’, ‘full sentences’ and ‘high-quality oral language’ are empirically audible categories which some people are capable of using, and some are not. For those who are deemed to be incapable of producing such categories, they are marked out for remediation through pedagogical interventions such as explicit vocabulary teaching and the policing of deviant speech. Recent work in educational linguistics has exposed how constructs pertaining to ‘high-utility’ and ‘academic’ vocabulary are manifestations of raciolinguistic ideologies which are tethered to long histories of colonial governance as well as reproducing the same kind of deficit discourses which characterised education policy in England and the USA in the 1960s and 70s (see Baker-Bell 2020b; Flores 2020). Flores (2020) rejects the non/academic dichotomy on the grounds that it does not reflect actual language use and builds linguistic borders which come to be policed by teachers. So, whilst academic language may commonly be (mis)characterised as having content-specific vocabulary and complex syntax, Flores shows how *all* communities use content-specific vocabulary and complex syntax regardless of whether they are deemed to be engaging in ‘academic’ practices or not. He writes:

From this perspective, whether one is positioned as successfully engaged in academic language is primarily determined by the white listening/reading subject whose perceptions have been shaped by histories of colonialism that continue to frame racialised speakers as coming from communities with linguistic deficiencies that need to be policed and corrected. (Flores 2020: 24)

Because it is marginalised communities who are more likely to be categorised by the white perceiving subject as breaching linguistic borders and engaging in ‘non-academic’ language then, it is these speakers who are more likely to be corrected through language policing. One form of language policing

which is granted academic credibility by the CCF is explicit vocabulary instruction, where teachers typically select ‘academic’ words and present these to children under the logics that that they are crucial for educational success and classroom participation. Words deemed to be ‘non-academic’ are labelled as inferior and can be outlawed through the use of ‘word jails’ or other methods of language policing (Cushing 2022). The justification of explicit vocabulary instruction in the CCF is made in reference to two Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) reports on language, literacy and communication (EEF 2016 [2020], 2018). The EEF, who reviewed the CCF, take the stance that explicit vocabulary instruction is the solution not just to improving literacy, but to social inequalities more broadly:

Improving young children’s vocabulary is often a high priority, particularly when teaching students from disadvantaged backgrounds who are more likely to have a less extensive vocabulary. (EEF 2018: 8)

EEF’s claim about disadvantaged children displaying ‘less extensive vocabulary’ is made in reference to Law et al (2017), itself which was co-funded by the EEF and Public Health England and reproduces normative ideologies about language development. Of broader concern however, is how structural inequalities are here framed as a ‘linguistic problem requiring linguistic solutions, rather than as a politico-economic problem requiring politico-economic solutions’ (Rosa 2016: 165). These linguistic interventions, such as explicit vocabulary instruction, are anchored to the so-called ‘word gap’ (see Aggarwal 2016; Cushing 2022; Johnson & Johnson 2021), a raciolinguistic ideology stemming from Betty Hart & Todd Risley’s (1995) widely discredited work which claimed that low-income African American children struggle in school not because of structural racism or poverty, but because of a supposed lack of ‘high-quality’ vocabulary in their family environment. Under this logic, the ‘word gap’ can be diminished by simply filling the heads of such children with more and better words.

Explicit vocabulary instruction represents a concrete realisation of this deficit-based ideology, with the CCF encouraging teacher educators to focus on words categorised as ‘tier two’ and ‘tier three’. Tiered vocabulary was proposed by the north American psychologists Isabel Beck, Margaret McKeown and Richard Omanson in a 1987 article and later popularised in a textbook for teachers (Beck et al 2013) which has increasing influence in schools and teacher education programs in England (e.g. Quigley 2018). It represents an attempt to organise words into a hierarchy based on categories such as usefulness, importance, and complexity, with ‘tier one’ words deemed to be those that are ‘simple’ and ‘basic’ whilst ‘tier two’ words are deemed to be those which add accuracy, sophistication and academic flair to language. Only words deemed to be in ‘tier two’ and ‘tier three’ are granted credibility in school because they are deemed to be content-specific and therefore words that teachers should focus on. Beck and her colleagues claim that low-income and racialised children require particular attention for explicit vocabulary instruction because they are less likely to experience ‘language rich’ environments at home and less likely to use language in ‘reflective, playful, or novel ways’ (Beck et al 1987: 156). This idea is based partly on the findings of a 1982 randomised control trial with a sample of low-income, majority Black students and the use of standardised language tests (Beck et al 1982), resulting in the claim that the ‘basic’ vocabulary of such children requires intervention through the teaching of vocabulary which is characteristic of the kind of books white, middle-class children read. Standardised language tests have their origins in the eugenics and IQ movements of the late 1800s, and have long been exposed as representing racist and ableist stances on language and cognitive ability under the guise of scientific objectivity, fairness and equality (e.g. Au 2009). The same deficit logics found within Beck et al’s work are redeployed by the EEF, whose research is focused on the ‘improvement’ of low-income and racialised communities. Ideologies of tiered vocabulary then, categorise the speech of marginalised children as deficient, deviant and in need of modification. In my own observations of classrooms (Cushing 2021; f.c), I have witnessed the language practices of marginalised children being policed under ideologies of tiered vocabulary and policies built on the directive to ‘say it again but say it better’ because they are deemed by the white perceiving subject to not be using academic language.

Finally, whilst in this section I have focused on the CCF as an integral part of the raciolinguistic policy assemblage, this is just one of many new mechanisms which perpetuate deficit discourses about language in teacher education under guises of scientific robustness and objectivity. For example, the Reading Framework (DfE 2022) makes extensive reference to word gap interventions as a panacea for social and racial inequalities. This same logic is deployed by Ofsted, such as in their recent research

review on curricula in English (Ofsted 2022) and in the political rhetoric of Amanda Spielman (2018) who claimed that marginalised children have a ‘limited vocabulary’ and are ‘held back’ in life as a result. In the final, following section I offer some thoughts on how teacher educators might reject these deficit stances of limitations, gaps and restrictions by taking a raciolinguistic perspective which seeks to build on the natural fluidity and fullness of all children’s language practices.

Reimagining teacher education from a raciolinguistic perspective

This article has joined demands for the decentring of whiteness in teacher education (e.g. Aronson & Meyers 2022; Baker-Bell et al 2020; Borelli et al 2020; Carter Andrews et al 2021; Croom 2020; Johnson 2022; Kholi 2008; Picower 2009; Souto-Manning 2021; Walton & Osman 2018) in placing a focus on language and how the contemporary teacher education policy assemblage in England reproduces raciolinguistic ideologies. Whilst my critique has examined various components of this policy assemblage, it should be clear that the problem is not necessarily the policies themselves but the broader structures of white supremacy which subordinate racialised populations on the basis that they exhibit linguistic deficiencies which require fixing.

I end this article by calling on UK teacher educators to imagine a future which centers issues of race on their curricula, challenges colonial and dominant ideologies about language, commits to an agenda of social justice which is driven by the redistribution of power, and ultimately looks to dismantle white supremacist framings of language. Issues of language have long been understood as key to decolonial and social justice struggles (see Charity Hudley & Flores 2022), but decolonisation and social justice will never be achieved when the responsibility is placed on marginalised speakers to modify their language to conform with the benchmarks of idealised whiteness. In wide reaching work which includes voices from the Global South and indigenous scholars, Avineri et al (2019: 3) push us to think about social justice and language in this way, arguing that justice in education requires the ‘radical reimagination of alternative worlds’ as opposed to simply championing the legitimacy of marginalised communities and their language practices or offering linguistic solutions to structural problems. What might these alternative worlds look like in teacher education policy in England? And how can teacher educators be encouraged to see themselves as language activists who are central agents of language policy making, enactment and resistance?

As a way forward then, future worlds in teacher education which prioritise language as part of social justice struggles might engage in the following kind of work. Teacher educators must continue to interrogate state-designed language policies and question the underlying assumptions these policies make about the language practices of all communities, but particularly those that are marginalised. This interrogation begins with an explicit awareness that teacher educators in England work within a hostile policy architecture which has long sought to reduce and discredit opportunities for critical, anti-racist curriculum building. It is also a time where the UK government are attempting to curtail powers held by teacher education providers through intimidatory policy moves such as the market review (DfE 2021a) and the increasing powers granted to Ofsted. Given this, teacher educators must look for what Lillian Weber (1997) calls *cracks in the system*: ideological and implementational spaces which allow for the enactment of anti-racist efforts even when the wall seems tall and impenetrable. Policy actors in the form of teacher educators yield resistant power in their capacities to forge policies from within the assemblage itself, especially in terms of how they might draw on their expert knowledge of the pre-service teachers they are working with and the unique context of the local school network which forms part of their community. Once teacher educators see themselves as language activists then, they must be prepared to undo their own ideologies about language. This work begins with interrogating the ways they may have been socialised into reproducing normative beliefs about socially constructed linguistic borders and categories which have the potential to harm the most marginalised members of a community. A central part of this work involves the absolute rejection of linguistic dichotomies (such as ‘in/correct’, ‘non/standard’, ‘non/academic’) which (mis)category racialised populations as deviant and in need of policing, and the taking up of non-dichotomous perspectives which center the fluidity of all speakers’ language practices (see Flores 2020). As part of this undoing work, teacher educators must be prepared to reflect on how their own modes of perception have the potential to cause harm to marginalised speakers. In taking this raciolinguistic perspective, teacher educators can begin to inhabit new perceiving practices which go beyond simply advocating for linguistic variation but interrogate the very colonial foundations which raciolinguistic ideologies are built on. All of the above requires teacher

educators to center diverse language patterns and usages within their own pedagogies and curricula, and to center the experiences and knowledge of those who have long been positioned and perceived as linguistically and biologically inferior through centuries of colonial oppression (de Sousa Santos 2018). This work is part of a broader social justice and decolonial agenda in teacher education which has long been practiced in parts of the Global South (e.g. Borelli et al 2020; Persky & Viruru 2019). In connecting these wider socio-economic and political struggles with the lived realities of classroom interactions and curriculum design, only then might teacher educators begin to widen the cracks and see the spaces for resistance in what is an undoubtedly oppressive policy assemblage.

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