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Unsettling language ideologies: Examples from writing teacher education in New Zealand and the United States

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Abstract

In this study, we use qualitative research methods to explore how discourses about language manifested within two university writing teacher education classes, one in New Zealand and one in the United States. We used a collaborative teaching journal and student work as main sources of data, which were analysed inductively at key points before, during and after the focal classes. Findings showed that in these two geographically and culturally distinct contexts, practices related to “correctness” and “academic” language or writing were similarly hard to displace, even when the underlying ideas were unsettled. Our analysis suggests teachers and teacher educators have similar struggles of balance—to both prepare students to succeed within the world as it is now and to prepare them to push against the systems that maintain inequities.

Keywords

Teacher education; literacy; language; writing; international

Introduction

As teacher educators and researchers, and as former high school English language arts teachers, we recognise writing instruction as a space that can reinforce the oppression of minoritised students and communities. In particular, writing teachers might do so through the dehumanising (Freire, 1970/2005) practice of language policing, or using “oral or written ‘corrections’” to “suppress, control, and regulate stigmatised forms of English in the classroom” (Cushing, 2020, p. 426). This is most often done “under the benevolent guise of giving children ‘opportunities’ and ‘access’ to jobs, academic achievement, and economic success” (Cushing, 2020, p. 431). Around the world, certain languages and dialects are seen as more powerful, and thus treated as more valuable. These hierarchies position one language over another one (e.g., English over te reo Māori in New Zealand) or a particular dialect over others within



the same language (e.g., white, middle-class, midwestern English over Black language), and the beliefs that drive these hierarchies are rooted in long-standing, often now invisibilised histories of racism and colonialism (Iyengar, 2014; Pennycook, 2002; Wiley, 2014). The history behind hegemonic language ideologies helps explain why language policies and practice are not easily aligned, and why the “rules” of “standard language” (SL) are not universally agreed upon across cultures, regions, or even individuals (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Lippi-Green, 1994; Smakman, 2012).

Based on our experiences, we have found some people read the role of “English teacher” as implicitly intertwined with “gatekeeper” of language, a position which inherently requires policing, though this has not been explicitly taught in our professional learning experiences. For example, when meeting someone new and telling them you are an English teacher, a common response is expressing fear that we are already judging the way they speak or that we will be ready to “correct” the grammar in their text messages. As teacher educators, we must examine our own role in maintaining these same hegemonic SL ideologies, whether we perpetuate subtractive approaches to language education which require students to replace their home language with the mainstream, dominant language or we advocate for additive views of language education which honour home languages in “appropriate” spaces (Flores & Rosa, 2015). In this article, we draw on data from both New Zealand and the Mid-Atlantic United States to explore how oppressive ideologies about language manifested within university writing teacher education classes and how we, as teacher educators, might work to visibilise and disrupt those ideologies.

Perspectives on language: Ideologies and space for criticality

De Bres (2015) defined language ideologies as “positions on language adopted by individuals to advance their linguistic and non-linguistic interests” (p. 680). She positioned this definition as more critical and specific than scholars like Spolsky (2004) who defined them as simply “beliefs” about language. As positions that advance interests, language ideologies (1) are constructed in the interest of a specific social or cultural group, (2) are inherently normative, (3) represent a strategic resource individuals can employ, (4) relations between language and society mean we can talk about dominant language ideologies, and (5) are subject to contestation and challenge. SL ideologies, in particular, are common across contexts and languages. Lippi-Green (1994) defined SL ideology as a bias towards “abstracted, idealised, homogeneous” language where the “most salient feature is the goal of suppression of variation of all kinds” (p. 166). While descriptions or definitions of SL tend to have some overlap, the details of which rules are enforced or valued as “standard” are not universally agreed upon across societies.

Language ideologies in New Zealand

In New Zealand, language ideologies reflect a complex language situation. As de Bres (2015) noted, the main factors are the presence of a national Indigenous minority language, te reo Māori, and many migrant languages from the Pacific and elsewhere, alongside English as a socially and politically dominant language. While English is the de facto dominant language, it is not legally one of the two official languages of New Zealand. The Māori Language Act (1987) established te reo Māori as an official language, and New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) was added as a second official language in 2006. Like in other contexts, including the US, de Bres (2015) noted that much language policy activity in New Zealand occurs in relation to compulsory education. In the national curriculum, te reo and NZSL are mentioned as official languages and, alongside English, it is stated that they can be studied as first or additional languages and can be the medium of instruction for all learning areas. However, most public schools are English-medium and “English” remains the name of the learning area related to reading, writing and oral language development in the national curriculum (Ministry of Education

[MoE], 2007). So, despite not being an official language, English remains the dominant language in educational, professional and other contexts.

Despite the encoding of bilingualism in the Treaty of Waitangi (1840) and recent affirmative language policies (e.g., MoE, 2013, 2020), New Zealand continues to be characterised as “predominantly, and some might say, resolutely, monolingual” (Major, 2018, p. 193). “Māori accented English” is positioned as an informal addition to formal New Zealand English, which has been studied for its alignment with various British Englishes and relative geographic and class uniformity (Gordon et al., 2004). Research on bilingualism in New Zealand has focused almost exclusively on speakers of English and te reo Māori, without much of a focus on the large percentage of the foreign-born population (Turnbull, 2018). Immigrants to New Zealand are often subjected to nationalist discourses about a single New Zealand identity that includes speaking English fluently (Lyons et al., 2010). Scholars like May (2018) note that language rights for all minority language speakers, not only speakers of te reo Māori, are often controlled by dominant language speakers as gatekeepers of “tolerability” who may not “extend to minority language speakers the linguistic privileges that they themselves take for granted” (p. 164).

Language ideologies in the United States

In the United States, “Dominant American English” (Paris, 2009) or “White Mainstream English” (Alim & Smitherman, 2012; Baker-Bell, 2020) is often upheld as the standard that all speakers are held to in schools, despite there being no official national language in the US and despite calls from educational organisations to be more inclusive of students’ languages (e.g., Baker-Bell et al., 2020; College Composition and Communication, 1974; National Council for Teachers of English, 1997). This ideology is prevalent across the broader American society (e.g., Arredondo, 2012; Baldwin, 1979; Greco, 2021; Martin et al., 2010; Sanchez, 1998) as well as in schools. In his survey of over 300 teachers in Missouri, for example, Metz (2019) found teachers held critical views of language; in other words, they “disagree with statements that associate language use with particular levels of intelligence, kindness or morality” (p. 25). At the same time, they see the larger US society as being suffused with linguistic prejudice, and thus, they “tend to support the idea that [standardised English] is correct, and that students should use [standardised English] rather than other dialects of English” (Metz, 2019, p. 25). These conflicting ideologies suggest that while teachers may see themselves as more disruptive than the wider society, they believe that others in schools and society will negatively judge both their own critical language pedagogies as well as their students’ “nonstandard” language practices. Thus, these fears may keep teachers, including more progressive educators, from implementing critical approaches to language education.

The English language came to the shores of both New Zealand and the US through European colonisation, through which Indigenous languages and cultures were marginalised and sometimes erased through violence, disease and assimilation. While the histories of these two countries are quite different, they share a settler colonial link that permeates language ideologies and practices in society and formal schooling (Terruhn, 2019). English, and only certain varieties of English, has been privileged in school spaces, continuing to grasp social capital (Bourdieu, 1999) and storied as the exclusive language of access to academic and professional success. The surreptitious power of these ideologies persists even though (or perhaps because) neither country has English encoded as an official language.

Education research and language practices

Language policing can surface in many different teaching practices, like requiring students to code-switch, banning languages from spoken or written discourse in class, or “correcting” students’ spoken or written language to match the “standard”. Regardless of their intentions, when writing teachers police

students' language, they also deny part of students' identities, positioning students, their families and their communities as less-than (Baker-Bell, 2020; Durán, 2020; Flores & Rosa, 2015; D. Martínez, 2017; R. Martínez, 2010; Metz, 2018, 2019). Educators, and many others across society, maintain beliefs about SL even without being able to specifically define the contours of that language (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Lippi-Green, 2012; Smakman, 2012). This means positioning standardised language practices as a pathway to social mobility and power is even more complicated. Flores and Rosa (2015) explained, "Seeking to identify the specific linguistic practices that constitute Standard English is a futile effort" and argued we should recognise "the ways that Standard English is produced as a cultural emblem and how the circulation of that emblem perpetuates raciolinguistic ideologies and thereby contributes to processes of social reproduction and societal stratification" (p. 152). Even additive approaches to language instruction, such as code-switching, many models of bilingual education, and other forms of "respectability language pedagogies" (Baker-Bell, 2017, 2020), position a SL as "normal" while othering different dialects and languages, thus furthering monoglossic views and maintaining linguistic hegemony (Baker-Bell, 2020; Flores & Rosa, 2015).

Teacher educators need to examine their own complicity in maintaining discourses of SL and work towards critical language ideologies in order to combat the injustices done in schools to speakers whose language practices do not align with SL practices. Often, these are speakers who are oppressed in other intersecting ways. Critical language ideologies (R. Martínez, 2013; Metz, 2018; Woodard & Rao, 2020) recognise relationships between power and language, value language as resource, and advocate for sustaining linguistic and cultural diversity. Thus, preparing and supporting teachers to teach in linguistically diverse classrooms requires teacher educators to intentionally confront and disrupt harmful notions of linguistic hegemony. Across the literature, which is primarily situated within initial teacher education contexts, teacher educators experience varying degrees of success and additional challenges in cultivating a critical language ideology with student teachers (STs).

Linguistic ideologies are often unconsciously ingrained for many teachers, making critical self-reflection a promising practice to uncover and interrogate one's own language practices and ideologies. Deroo and Ponzio (2020) used multimodal compositions as a tool to promote pluralistic views of language practices and understand STs' ideologies around language, identity and power. Their multimodal compositions highlighted a wide range of highly complex and superficial understandings of language and identity. However, STs demonstrated that language identity connects to feelings of acceptance and belonging, and awareness that language provides or denies access to opportunities. Another approach to critical self-reflection comes from Franco et al.'s (2020) study, which showed tools like language maps and manifestos remained influential for teachers as many created a "public declaration of their beliefs, values, and community practices in their classrooms" (p. 404). Critical self-reflection promotes awareness of language ideologies and provides space to think through the practical applications of language ideologies.

A consistent theme surrounding language ideologies and practices in teacher education is the tension between providing students access to dominant language practices while also valuing linguistic diversity. In a study with three STs, Woodard and Rao (2020) found participants demonstrated conflicting attitudes towards multilingual literacies. While they wanted to preserve and honour their primary-aged students' home language, they felt an obligation to help students access a standard or academic language. Similarly, participants began to recognise issues with SL ideology but lacked a critical stance to interrogate the reasons of power and racism behind the issues. Litzenberg (2016) also explored teachers' perspectives of correctness using dialogues from non-native and native English speakers. The teachers' focus on mistakes, even when mistakes did not detract from listener comprehension, suggested they envisioned standard English as the ultimate goal for learners.

Even when teachers understand the theory behind a critical language ideology, teacher-students often have difficulty moving from that abstract understanding to concrete practices (Lindahl et al., 2021). Nuñez and Espinoza (2019) found mentor teachers play a key role in uncovering and developing bilingual STs' supportive language ideologies, which also allowed STs to see how teachers have agency

to challenge normative language practices and develop more inclusive practices. Another promising practice in developing critical language ideologies is incorporating local knowledge into the classroom (Espinoza et al., 2021; Lindahl et al., 2021; Seltzer, 2022). Intentionally building school-to-community relationships offers teachers a flexible approach to humanising language pedagogy in future classes.

Overall, current research in this field suggests disrupting linguistic prejudice in a variety of contexts remains a challenging and complex issue for teacher educators. In this study, we aimed to extend that complexity, examining how language ideologies and prejudices manifest in two distinct writing teacher education spaces.

Methodology

Methods

Work that we, the authors, have done both independently and collaboratively provided us space to question linguistic hegemony while also reflecting on our own complicity in the oppressive systems that maintain that hegemony. We are all white women whose home language practices have been very close to “White Mainstream English” (Baker-Bell, 2020) and, more specifically, are former high school writing teachers and teacher educators. As we have moved across spaces around the world, we have become particularly interested in how SL discourses and language ideologies are at work within different locations and cultures. After Jessica and Charlotte (Authors 1 and 2) realised they would both be teaching writing-focused teacher education classes in spring 2020, we met to think through our syllabi together and decided to keep track of the conversations we were having about how teaching writing teachers was both similar and different in New Zealand and Mid-Atlantic US contexts. As our planning conversations continued, we expanded our research design to include class assignments and interviews with students and invited additional collaborators, including Kelsey (Author 3). In this multi-site case study, we use qualitative research methods to explore the following question: How do both coded and explicit discourses about English and standardised language practices surface in writing teacher education spaces?

Study contexts and participants

This study took place in two contexts: one online class for already-certified primary school teachers taught by Jessica in New Zealand and one face-to-face class for prospective secondary ELA teachers taught by Charlotte in the Mid-Atlantic US. In this article, we use the term “teacher-students” to collectively refer to our participants, all of whom were both teachers and students, although some were completing their initial certification, and some were already experienced classroom teachers.

The New Zealand class was all online (by design) and students were aspiring or practising teachers from several different programmes in the Division of Education. The group included six women with a range of prior teaching experiences (some earning a postgraduate qualification before entering professional experience, and others who had been teaching for decades already). They were also diverse in age (20s–60s), ethnic identity and background, and were originally from four different countries (China, Fiji, New Zealand and US).

In the US preservice writing teacher education class, which took place before teacher-students began their field experiences in local classrooms, participants were all undergraduates with no traditional classroom teaching experience. The spring 2020 cohort included five men and nine women. Most teacher-students identified as white Anglo-Americans from urban, suburban and rural contexts in the Mid-Atlantic US; the class also included one international student from China, one who identified as Korean American, and one who identified as a “third-culture kid”, born in South America and adopted

by a family in the United States. The class was designed as face-to-face, but was moved to a synchronous online format in March due to COVID-19 precautions.

Data sources and analysts

We primarily relied on a collaborative teaching journal and student work as sources of data. Our collaborative journal was shared across one semester and focused on the preparation and teaching of two classes about writing pedagogy. The shared digital journal served as a space for us to create memos and reflect on conversations and activities that took place during our planning and the duration of the class.

For this analysis, we also examined relevant class assignments. From Jessica's class, relevant coursework included teacher-students' weekly reading responses along with longer written work about writing teacher identity and theories of assessment. From Charlotte's class, we analysed teacher-students' weekly dialogic learning logs (Alford & Jensen, 2021); reflections from the beginning, middle, and end of the semester; writing teacher creeds; and written responses collected as part of an assignment titled "Exploring Writing in the World", where teacher-students collected examples of different kinds of "texts" they encountered in the world, interviewed a young writer, and reflected on their learning.

Inductive analysis of our shared journal was undertaken collaboratively, both through responses to each other across time and then afterwards as we read the journal separately, producing analytical commentary with clarifying questions, interesting (dis)connections, and potential patterns. After the classes ended, we met to discuss emerging patterns and additional questions, including teacher-students' hesitation about grading/assessment that was not focused on prescriptive conventions or forms, as well as persistent questions about how to "make space" for conversations and curriculum that push back on linguistic prejudice. We also returned to the literature to ask additional questions about how larger cultural discourses about language might be at work in our classes. For example, we specifically inquired into how teacher-students might feel tension between their own personal beliefs about language and their perceptions about how students might be discriminated against in the larger society (Metz, 2019), as well as tensions between official language and de facto practice (Barr & Seals, 2018). With these patterns and questions in mind, we looked at student data and produced iterative notes and selected illustrative data samples to analyse together.

New understandings

Across this shared analysis, we were able to uncover important tensions in our teacher education classes that provided insight into how writing teachers may, whether intentionally or not, maintain oppressive language practices in their discourses around teaching writing. Specifically, we saw that even when teacher-students were critical of SL ideology and began taking up the discourse of a critical or counter-hegemonic stance, many still struggled to let go of oppressive SL ideologies when they imagined their future practice. Practices related to "correctness" and "academic" language or writing were hard to displace, even when the underlying ideas were unsettled.

Results/findings

Expanded values and visibilised linguistic prejudices: Shifting discussions and beliefs

In the New Zealand class, teacher-students came to the class viewing their role as writing teachers as connected to supporting students in mastering "correct" English, ostensibly with the belief that doing so would provide opportunities for students in their future academic and professional lives. These

discourses were further supported by some teachers' own perceived benefits from "learning correct English" as immigrants to New Zealand, or as students from lower-decile schools growing up in New Zealand. In the class itself, they also expected to be evaluated strictly on the "correctness" of their writing.

In the third week of the class, Penny (all student names are pseudonyms), a teacher-student with many years of experience, posted to the discussion forum that "there is just so much to teaching writing" and then elaborated by first mentioning "grammar, punctuation, and mechanics". For this teacher-student, and others, one of the main functions of being a "writing teacher" was emphasising correctness and teaching correctness in order to support students' success. She continued, "Many of our students can become competent writers—they can learn grammar and style and express themselves effectively." As a teacher-student working in a school that served a community with comparatively fewer socioeconomic resources, Penny felt pressure to shorten the perceived gaps (Milner, 2013) between her students and their more affluent peers. She saw an emphasis on certain types of writing and literacy practices and English-language correctness as the best way to do so. Penny noted that many of the students in her rural school came from homes without access to books and located far from a public library, so while their oral language skills were "excellent", they had a lot of "catching up" to do with print literacy, including through their own writing.

However, as the semester continued, this discourse of "correctness" and its emphasis on surface features became unsettled. Penny, and others, began embracing a focus on students finding their own purposes for writing and prioritising supporting students' development of ideas. Sharon, another experienced teacher, said she was starting to re-view her role as a teacher of writing to be more about "motivating writers to develop a sense of their own purpose". Shifts like these, while not directly connected to power, colonisation, or other forms of oppression, suggested an expanding definition of their role as writing teachers and of what was most important in their teaching.

A rich discussion about English-centred discourses and practices grew from another student, Elsie's, "incidental" question about what she had noticed in some of our readings. In a new thread in the online forum, she asked, "Why do some of the readings talk about teaching 'English' and some about teaching 'language arts?' Is there a difference?" After Jessica offered a brief explanation, she replied, "The term English comes with issues. It's a good example of ideologies of power hiding in one word, right?!" Other students joined in the resulting discussion, which turned towards language policy in New Zealand and highlighted the fact that although English is not an official language, Elsie recognised "the blind assumption that it is ... is so pervasive". She added that we "get it wrong" when a classroom is explicitly or implicitly an "English-only" space, in part because it sends the message to students that "their whole self is not welcome in our class, and in order to participate they need to suppress part of their identity." Through the course of this online exchange, Penny came to the conclusion that she now saw "labelling the curriculum area English [as] very limiting". This example shows a further shift, where teacher-students began more directly connecting language with culture and recognising some ways in which restrictive language policies were oppressive. Still, for most of the teacher-students participating in this conversation, it was clear the implied choices were English-only or also including te reo Māori, with some of the follow up comments stating they were "very supportive of compulsory te reo Māori curriculum". There was not any direct discussion about the many varieties of English or other languages students might bring with them to the classroom.

In the US class, most students described—in class conversations and in early written reflections—their experiences with writing using words like "academic", "school-related", "strict", and "serious". One student, Jamie, reflected: "In school, writing to me has always looked and felt like writing within a template to someone else's expectations and perceptions of what is 'good'". They talked about specific experiences, such as writing college essays, preparing for high-stakes tests, and learning about writing formulas and "standard" grammar. While many of them also quickly acknowledged these experiences led to fear of taking risks, for most of them, they also saw being successful at those experiences as part of what helped get them to where they were. Brooke, for example, commented, "I enjoyed learning

about spelling, grammar and conventions and understood these concepts pretty well since preschool ... I usually got exemplary grades on my writing or language arts assessments.” Yet she also related that she would “freeze up” when not given a prompt or when forced to write in a genre outside her comfort zone. “The open-ended scares me,” she added.

Early in the class, Charlotte aimed to expand teacher-students’ understandings of what counts as writing and assigned articles that introduced concepts of linguistic hegemony and oppression (e.g., Martinez & Carabello, 2018; Martinez et al., 2019; Winn, 2018; Zuidema, 2005). During these in-class discussions, as well as across students’ weekly, paired dialogic learning logs, students often expressed more expansive views of writing and took up ideas of anti-oppressive language pedagogy in their talk. Katie, for example, discussed how her view of writing had changed, stating that traditional school writing (such as the five-paragraph essay) were very limiting and that teachers should emphasise the kinds of writing students were already doing in their lives. Dylan commented: “We need to teach [students] that they can write and that all forms of writing are real in our eyes.” Comments like these highlighted more expansive notions of what counts as writing and began opening space for students’ own interests, passions and language to become part of their writing curriculum.

As the semester continued, teacher-students’ talk became more explicitly critical of SL ideologies. For example, Brooke and Mackenzie, both White Mainstream English speakers, discussed linguistic prejudice in their shared learning log. Brooke began by naming society as “hypocritical” for claiming to be against prejudice, but still judging folks’ use of English. She described how several of her multilingual friends, in particular, were often looked down on for their use of English in stores and restaurants and then also judged for “*not* having an accent, as others feel their current use of English does not reflect the individual’s skin colour or national origin.” After sharing similar examples from her own multilingual friends, Mackenzie responded with the following:

The opening statement [from Zuidema, 2005] about linguistic prejudice reminds me of ... how overt racism or sexism is frowned upon but we can hide our racism under the guise of language prejudice ... I’m glad that Zuidema acknowledges what’s really at the core of linguisticism and our obligation as ELA teachers: language permeates everything, and what we implement about language in our classrooms has the power to affect how students see themselves and others in every other academic setting and in the world beyond.

Across this example, these two prospective writing teachers were clearly critical of linguistic prejudice in society at large, and while the examples they discussed were primarily felt second-hand through friends, they were beginning to see language ideologies at work in their own classrooms as a part of those larger societal systems. This example, and others from across discussions and assignments, show evidence of moving beyond superficial notions of language difference, explicitly connecting linguisticism with racism.

“Academic language” and “correctness”: Disrupting deep-rooted practices

Despite evidence of teacher-students’ shifting beliefs about language and prejudice, imagined practices still came back to “academic writing” or “academic assignments”. This was true across the US class, even for teacher-students who had been explicitly critical of SL ideologies, acknowledging connections between language and race. For example, later in Mackenzie and Brooke’s weekly learning log, Mackenzie asked the following question in response to readings about alternative writing assessment and feedback that de-prioritises “correctness” (Bomer, 2010; Patterson Williams et al., 2020):

I guess one of my concerns is how I’ll need to check for grammar and conventions sometimes, especially if I’m grading something that’s supposed to be traditional

academic writing. Does positive encouragement cancel out the potentially negative effects of a bunch of red circles?

Here Mackenzie was clearly still grappling with her beliefs about linguistic prejudice and what she sees as the actual role she'll be asked to carry out in school. In another assignment, Quinn wrote that while students should have opportunities to write in multiple formats, "to participate in academic writing, these students need different qualities like analysis skills, sentence construction skills, grammar skills, spelling skills, all the skills that pertain to professional and academic writing". Teacher-students, like Mackenzie and Quinn, imagined strategies for creating more language-inclusive spaces in their classrooms. However, they had not yet imagined a world where they wouldn't also be expected to be a gatekeeper through helping prepare students for "traditional academic writing".

This concept of balancing "academic" writing also came up in conversations about time management and planning in the writing classroom. Teacher-students often asked questions about how they would find time to include various elements of a writing curriculum discussed in class (e.g., providing students choice and opportunities for expressive writing, establishing writers' notebooks and other "writerly" habits or routines, student-led inquiry into language and power, assessing writing process over product) alongside the more traditional elements of an ELA class that they were already familiar with (e.g., assigning literary analysis or response, providing detailed rubrics for assessment, preparing students for standardised written exams). The dominant narrative of what ELA class should look like was primarily seen as something that could be added to, but not replaced.

As teacher-students in the class expanded their definitions of what kinds of writing and language might "count" in schools, along with developing ideas about how they might create opportunities for critical inquiry into language and power, our in-class conversations often came back to practical questions like, "But when will we have time to do all of these things?" or "How do we fit it all in?" In reflecting on these conversations, we see how even though explicitly critical conversations about race, class, and gender might happen contemporaneously, teachers' beliefs about language and imaginings of potential practices to mitigate linguistic injustice are often still additive. Much like how many teachers view multicultural or YA books as a complement or add-on to traditional canonical literature study (e.g., Banks & Banks, 2020), the anti-oppressive language policies and practices the teachers imagined within the US-based writing methods class felt like practices and policies that teachers must do on top of their typical gate-keeping activities (i.e., "correcting" language within "academic" literary analysis or other school genres).

Similarly, in the New Zealand context, while teacher-students seemed generally willing to expand their abstract thinking about language ideology, there were moments of hesitation when picturing the enactment of these ideas in their classrooms. For the most part, they were eager to try the approaches they were learning about the teaching of writing. After a few weeks, one student said, "How I wish I had a group of children in front of me to teach" about keeping notebooks and living as writers, finding and recognising their own purposes for writing.

Still, when discussion came back to assessment, it was often difficult to imagine moving away from adherence to the measurable "correctness" of "academic English". Developing a theory of assessment was one of their written assignments, and in an online discussion to support this extended task, one teacher-student said, "I'm afraid that assessment is where I see the strict parameters come in" in terms of surface features and correctness. A few weeks later, a conversation about New Zealand's period of National Standards came up. These National Standards in reading, writing and mathematics were implemented in 2010 and required schools to participate in systematic and standardised reporting on student achievement. The Standards were ended at the end of 2017, but Sharon recognised schools were still "a bit fixated on grading" as a result of the period when the Standards were in effect. Penny agreed, saying, "National standards did a disservice to teachers and students" and that teaching through a student-centred workshop approach actually seemed much simpler and more straightforward than what she had grown used to. Teacher-students like Sharon and Penny recognised how the Standards limited

what was valued in student writing and how other approaches might better fit students' real needs as writers.

The teacher-students in the New Zealand class were exposed to practices of assessment and response to writing that prioritised aspects beyond correctness, both with each other in peer review and through instructor methods of feedback and evaluation. Their first written assignment required working with a partner and reflecting on the process, and at the end of the semester, everyone shared a creative piece of writing they had produced alongside their conceptual and pedagogical learning. Several teacher students remarked about these processes and the realisation that the feedback they most valued from one another was about their ideas and the overall success of their pieces, that attention to surface features and "correctness" was not actually what interested them as writers. Jessica aimed to mark assignments and give feedback in ways that valued their voices, ideas and unique expression. Reflecting back on an assignment, Sharon said she had not understood what de-prioritising "correctness" meant until she was re-reading a paper she had submitted and noticed a few typos. She was "mortified" and said she had panicked about receiving her paper back with line notes about errors; she worried about letting down her teacher. When she received feedback she saw as focused on ideas and constructed to honour her as a writer and support her future writing, she realised the fear she experienced was probably similar to what younger students feel. She recognised beyond "correctness" there are other aspects of writing that instructors might focus on, and that, as a teacher, her feedback would be more useful to students if she commented on those aspects instead.

Discussion

Examining the discourses that surfaced across these two contexts highlighted the persistence of SL ideologies and the complexities of disrupting those ideologies in teacher education. Most teacher-students in the New Zealand and the United States-based classes came into the courses with life and school experiences that reinforced their SL-related beliefs. As successful students and professionals, they often saw their successes as linked to their attention to and adeptness with language. English, and particular varieties of English, were normalised as the neutral "standard" to which any other varieties were compared. Within these two teacher education contexts, we aimed to unsettle these ideologies through various critical language pedagogy experiences, many of which other research has supported or suggested (e.g., Deroo & Ponzio, 2020; Franco et al., 2020; Litzenberg, 2016; Woodard & Rao, 2020). These experiences included decentring "correctness" in our own writing feedback; exploring "real-world" writing to expand what counts as writing; interviewing and/or working closely with young writers; inviting teacher-students to write creeds or belief statements about writing and language; engaging with activities that explicitly highlight connections between power, racial or ethnic oppression, and language; and reading materials that position language as a resource. Teacher-students in both classes showed evidence of critical stances towards SL ideologies and even made explicit links to how issues of language were linked to current or historical issues of power, race and colonisation.

Across contexts, we saw how de-prioritising conversations about "correctness" led to richer conversations about writing and writers. Teacher-students were able to see and celebrate so much more within their own and students' writing when that evaluative lens was broadened. However, we also recognise this expansion alone is not enough. Despite educators' good intentions and their critique of SL ideologies, enacting SL practices through additive approaches still serves to maintain hierarchies based in racial, ethnic and socioeconomic differences. While the teacher-students in the United States and New Zealand both recognised the importance of valuing students' linguistic repertoires, they also struggled to let go of more traditional notions of students' need for access to "correct", "standard", or "academic" language to be successful in and beyond school (e.g., Lindahl et al., 2021; Metz, 2019; Woodard & Rao, 2020). The United States and New Zealand have distinct language policies and histories related to language, colonisation and racism. Yet, across both contexts, roles of "English

teacher” or “writing teacher” as a gate-keeper of language and holder/distributor of SL grammar knowledge were similarly figured (Holland et al., 1998). And these roles were more easily added to than displaced. Teacher-students in both spaces critically reflected on issues with SL ideologies. However, when they began imagining how this would look in classrooms, most saw new practices (e.g., explicitly inquiring into language and power with students, decentring “correctness” in teacher feedback, opening up opportunities to write in multiple genres for multiple audiences, etc.) as additional work to do alongside helping students access the SL they might need in academic and other social settings. Zooming in to look at differences across the two contexts also adds to our understanding of the complexities of this work. Teacher-students in the New Zealand class seemed to more easily push back against SL ideologies and practices. We see this likely connected to two major factors: 1) at least some of the teacher-students had classroom experience, and 2) government policies, at least officially, supported more expansive, inclusive language practices. Their hesitations about practice were connected to specific standards and assessments they were familiar with in their own teaching. However, their familiarity with those standards and assessments also facilitated negotiation: they were able to more clearly recognise what was actually mandated or required and how they might work around current traditions of practice to make changes they felt were best for their students.

For the US class, we wondered if the pervasive cultural image of a “high school English teacher” (Rubin & Land, 2017) remained powerful for STs who might not yet have had a chance to position themselves in their own expression of that role. Without access to students in classrooms, there were no opportunities to inquire into and build relationships with linguistically diverse communities, as others have recommended (Espinoza et al., 2021; Lindahl et al., 2021; Seltzer, 2022), and the theories and practices discussed in our class might not have felt concrete. Their perceived fears about lack of autonomy in the classroom may also have limited their imagination for what they could do in their classrooms. This latter fear, while not new for STs in the US, may also be increasing in the current climate, as there are more and more attacks on teachers who explicitly aim to work against prejudice (e.g., López et al., 2021; Meckler & Natanson, 2022). We wonder also if their identities as students who want to be successful at school might have been difficult to negotiate around the presumed value of SL practices, particularly without professional experiences and years of living with other facets of their identities taking precedence.

Conclusions and implications

This work, and the larger study from which it grows, offered opportunities to analyse language use and ideologies in the teaching of writing and writing pedagogy in two geographically, culturally and politically distinct contexts. Systematic collaborative analysis like we engaged can support a reflective teacher education practice as well. Implications for teacher education include considering the importance of facilitating conversations that push to visibilise discourses about language hierarchies and the non-neutrality of SL ideologies, both with preservice teachers and teachers who are already doing professional work. For example, while policy in New Zealand officially guards space for non-English languages, in the realities of schooling for many students, the discourse around “correct” English is exclusive. Not only is the privileged language English, but a very specific strand of English that binds New Zealand directly to its colonial past. In analysing this data, Jessica noticed some missed opportunities to facilitate more explicit learning about language ideologies, particularly in and beyond conversations about New Zealand’s aspirations towards biculturalism (MoE, 2011).

In the absence of national language policy in the US, schools and teachers continue to circulate de facto hierarchies that position the standardised language as mandatory and any deviation as additional, or even threatening. We hope future research might explore how teacher educators might re-frame field experiences (and other work alongside young writers) as opportunities for teachers to practise moving beyond “correctness” in authentic contexts. For example, in the US context, while teacher-students

would ideally be paired with mentor teachers who are critically conscious of language ideologies and practise more appreciative stances towards language variation in their students' talk and writing, Charlotte and Kelsey are considering ways they might prepare teacher-students for open conversations with their mentor teachers about language ideologies, and plan inquiry units for their own students to explore the ways language and power are entangled across different spaces in their lives.

In each class, overarching questions demanded attention to the ways teachers and teacher educators have similar struggles of balance—to both prepare students to succeed within the challenges of the world as it is now, and to prepare them to push against systems that maintain inequities. We also see, and want to offer opportunities for our students to see, discourses of “correctness” and “academic language” as linked to maintaining unjust systems of power. As the work of Metz (2019) and other scholars reminds us, without explicit attention to disruption, even people with good intentions (including teacher educators like us) are participating in and perpetuating those systems.

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