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SOY PORQUE SOMOS: BLACK SPANISH TEACHERS DEVELOPING HEMISPHERIC BLACK LANGUAGE PEDAGOGIES

Abstract:

This article explores the ways in which U.S.-based Spanish language teachers who are racialized as Black, develop and navigate Critical Race Pedagogies (Anya, 2020) in order to resist linguistic pushout (Austin, 2022) and confront the racializing myths that serve to erase Afrodiasporic and Indigenous (hi)stories from Spanish language curricula. Specifically, the article investigates the supports, challenges, and recommendations of eight Black Spanish educators inclusive of authors one and two. The interviews elicited from the teachers most notably illuminated a shared experience of navigating academic institutions that required a defense of Blackness in order to restore balance to the classroom and to overarching antiBlack educational systems. Informed by linguistic and cultural expertise within themselves, their homes and communities, participants nurtured their defense of Blackness through Black-Self Determination or moves toward a full recognition of Black humanity (Wynter, 2003) in the Spanish classroom. The authors argue that a sense of harmony and truth which predates Greco-Roman notions of democracy and prizes order and justice, what Kemetic societies referred to as Maat (Obenga, 2004), was constantly being pursued through these teachers' efforts. Through cultivating Black historicity, cross-ethnic solidarities and Ubuntu (the essence of humanity and compassion [Makalela, 2018]), alongside a steadfast resistance to negative stereotypes of Black lifeways, the teachers experiences revealed approaches toward the development of what Clemons (2021a) calls Hemispheric Black Language Pedagogies which highlight Afrodiasporic presence and histories, to insist upon student success using pedagogical, curricular, and policy choices in the varying educational contexts.

Keywords: Black language learners ♦ Spanish language education ♦ Black language pedagogies ♦ Afrodiaspora

Introduction

In October of 2021, several language educators met to discuss the challenges and opportunities in centering Black students in language education. After two days of panels, workshopping, and discussions across three overarching topics—dual language education, content-based English as a Second Language (ESL) education and world language (WL) education—many of us left feeling energized about the prospects of engaging an often underrepresented (Davis & Markham, 1991; Poza, 2013) and underserved language learning population in the U.S. context (Anya, 2020; Baggett, 2015). In our discussions, we noted that, for Spanish in particular, engaging Black students is not only necessary to serve a linguistically marginalized population but also redresses systemic erasures of Afro-descended Spanish languaging populations from language curricula across educational contexts (Davis et al., 2023). Most importantly, we left with a sense that much more could be done to create a welcoming environment for students and teachers racialized as Black in Spanish language classrooms and curricula.

The current article asserts a fundamental right to Spanish language education for Black language learners and suggests that Black language educators are invaluable in assuring this right is given. Moreover, we suggest that the Black Spanish teachers interviewed, through the development of *Hemispheric Black Language Pedagogies* (Clemons, 2021), create language learning environments that balance the tensions between Black resistance and Ubuntu—the very definition of being human in society (Somet, 2023). Hemispheric Black Language Pedagogies can be described as any pedagogical practice aimed at expanding notions of Blackness (and Black language ability) with the effort of providing more comprehensive histories and understandings of how the racial category was created and mobilized through language practices in post-colonial contexts, with the colonial period being marked as the genesis of modern race formations that currently structure the Américas (Veronelli, 2015). Additionally, since Hemispheric Black Language Pedagogies require a variationist approach that validates the language practices of a wide and heterogenous group of language learners, the article asserts that attending to the needs of Black language learners benefits all language learners across U.S. classroom types and spaces.

While much of the work on Black teachers in WLs relies on theoretical frames proposed within varying disciplines across the fields of education and linguistics, the current article theorizes the development of Hemispheric Black Language Pedagogies through the lens of Africana as an extension of the Black Radical Traditions (Carr, 2011; Robinson, 2000). More specifically, we argue for Black self-determination as primary in the development of critical language pedagogies through the pursuance of Maat, or just and conscientious enactments to be in

balance (Beatty, 2023; Obenga, 2004) with the natural and social world. The erasure or misrepresentation of those racialized as Black (or any group, for that matter) within language or any learning context, we contend, upsets the balance of a society in which all people can self-actualize.

Background

In “Spanish So White,” Schwartz (2023) asks: “What does it mean when you know you belong in a classroom? What about when you learn that a space is designed for you, your learning, your voice, your future in mind? And what if you never need to acknowledge that privilege” (p. 71)? In asking these questions, Schwartz recognized U.S. Spanish classrooms as existing in design and function for a generally white, monoglossic, and L2 population. This results in Spanish language learning as a benefit for some, yet a burden for others (Clemons, 2022). Discussions about the absence of students and teachers racialized as Black in foreign or WLs are not new. Several scholars have noted this absence, citing a sharp decline in African American students after first- or second-year courses, which results in a lack of African American instructors in WL education (Anya & Randolph, 2019; Poza, 2013). Acknowledging the lack of diversity amongst Black students studied within these paradigms—with the focus largely on African Americans in WL programs, we understand the underrepresentation of Black Spanish language learners and teachers to be related not only to the historical conditions that track African American students in underfunded schools with limited access to language programs (Chávez-Moreno, 2021; Glynn & Wassell, 2018), but also to processes of racialization in the U.S. that reproduce ideologies of language deficiency for Black students across several ethnic identities (Smith, 2017).

For Black students, who have consistently been marked as deficient language users (Baker-Bell, 2020; Sledd, 1969; Smitherman, 2017), the Spanish classroom can represent an additional space of “unbelonging”. Peña (2022) notes how varying moments and experiences of “unbelonging” result in the erasure and marginalization of heterogeneous understandings of Black subjectivities, while also ignoring the complexities of Blackness, migration, and colonial afterlives. Through her concept of “coloniality of language”, Veronelli (2015) understands colonization as the genesis of modern epistemological and ideological formations of racialized populations as subhuman and thus incapable of producing expressive and rational language. Therefore, understanding Black language users as capable learners of Spanish as a colonial language is a fraught endeavor. As such, imagining Spanish language classrooms as a welcoming space for students and teachers racialized as Black requires a response to the ways that Black humanity has been erased or pushed to the margins of conceptual framings of

Latinidad, of native Spanish users, and of legitimate culture and knowledge creators. It is important to note here that our understanding of race, as a socially constructed rather than biological one (Hall, 1997), is underpinned by notions of Blackness as a category that is inextricably linked to the development and maintenance of capitalism in modern society (Robinson, 2000). Since racial categories have always reflected the sociopolitical climates, spaces, and geopolitical times in which they emerge (Baker et al., 2022; Ibrahim, 2004; Omi & Winant, 1994; Robinson, 2000), language, as a form of racialization (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Juárez, 2008) can serve as a technology to reinforce or rebuff localized race-making forces particularly in language learning spaces. The knowledge of these racializing processes has the potential to return and elevate agency for all involved in formalized language learning particularly in U.S. classrooms.

Divisive constructions of race and language must be critically explored in both research and practice across space and time particularly for language learners racialized as Black. Clemons (2021b) explores the ethnoracial construction of Dominican-Americans in the U.S. context highlighting the ways in which raciolinguistic enregisterment (Rosa & Flores, 2017), the process whereby race and language are both jointly constructed and recognized, fluctuates for racialized Spanish-users with acute context-dependent specificity. The findings from her critical discourse analyses are buttressed by data reflecting that both in dual language (Cervantes-Soon, 2018) and WL (Anya & Randolph, 2019) spaces, linguistic pushout (Austin, 2022) occurs, limiting the entry, participation, and success rates of students who are racialized as Black in language learning spaces. Additionally, Black students engage in self-policing (Smith et al., 2020) as a result of abusive and exclusionary literacy and writing instruction that reject the sophistication (Kynard, 2013) and validity of Black translingual practices from the U.S., Caribbean, and continental African diaspora.

Nevertheless, there is evidence of resistance and genius on behalf of Black students in language classrooms. In an elementary two-way immersion setting, Black children drew upon their Black languaging practices to both be creative and enact resistance against standard language ideologies (Frieson, 2021). Anya (2016) outlines how African American students studying abroad in Brazil overcame the monolingual bias of their program to find success in their Portuguese studies through directly exploring their Blackness as articulated through style, social and religious practices, community work, and art. A common thread between these studies is the rejection of hierarchical and monoglossic language ideologies (Flores & Rosa, 2015) on behalf of learners who draw from their cultural and linguistic repertoires to participate in language architecture (Flores, 2020). To this end, accounts of translanguaging (García & Otheguy, 2015) and multimodal resistance (McLean, 2020) on behalf of Black and Latinx

students in dual language spaces (Cervantes-Soon et al., 2021) support Black self-determination to be recognized as fully human linguistic agents. Seltzer (2019) argues that such agency spans Black diasporic communities by describing how secondary students in New York City from the Dominican Republic, Sierra Leone, Yemen, and Puerto Rico carefully chose how to deploy language, for specific times, impacts, and audiences. How we investigate these navigational moves and design for their enactment is critical to Black linguistic exploration in formalized language study.

Calls to center these dexterous linguistic moves on behalf of Black language students in classrooms through purposeful ideological (Flores, 2020) and curricular (Austin & Hsieh, 2021) shifts, parallel the lengthy and widespread documentation of Black erasure from those in even broader contexts. From contemporary Argentinian society (Gayles, 2021) to the linguistic weaponization in white Bolivian Spanish varieties (Sánchez-Martin & Gonzales, 2022), Black representation continues to be a rallying cry for the humane and accurate reflection of African diasporic Spanish-users as foundational to both the modern era (French, 2021; Robinson, 2000) and as deserving of expressing that truth through their own languaging. Recognizing U.S. Spanish classrooms as a place of Black unbelonging, this study extends Schwartz' queries focusing on the agency of Black people to ask, how do Black Spanish teachers navigate their pedagogies in support Black self-determination in ways that affirm themselves and their students as fully human linguistic agents? In what follows, we review the construction of a theoretical frame for understanding Black self-determination and the pursuit of Maat for Black Language Teachers.

Theorizing Black language teacher pedagogies

In order to contend with the contradictory nature of being Black in WL education programs, we rely on two interacting theoretical frameworks in the exploration of our data. First, we frame this work through the lens of linguistic pushout (Austin, 2022) which acknowledges the three-pronged challenge of countering antiBlackness in language teacher preparation. The challenges include 1) how Black students are framed as unmotivated and intellectually inferior (Anya & Randolph, 2019), 2) the ways in which cultural (Pascual y Cabo & Prada, 2018) critical and historical (Kubanyiova & Crookes, 2016) realities of Black students are not centered in language teaching, and 3) that idealized whiteness (Flores, 2016) and native speakerism (Nieto, 2004; Smith, 2020) predominate in these spaces. Attending directly to this need, Clemons (2021a) proposed an expansion of Baker-Bell's (2020) anti-racist Black language pedagogy to include hemispheric Blackness as a point of departure. Whereas Baker-Bell proposes anti-racist Black language pedagogy as a way to "provide Black students with opportunities to learn about

and use Black language as they simultaneously learn to reject AntiBlack Linguistic Racism” (cf. Kinloch, 2020, p. x), *Hemispheric Black Language Pedagogies* provides Black students with knowledges and histories of Black language practices across a variety of languages. *Hemispheric Black Language Pedagogy* therefore requires “a rejection of boundary-making ideologies that have resulted in linguistic and racial trauma within educational spaces” (Clemons, 2021, p. 237).

We then put the linguistic pushout experienced by Spanish teachers and students, racialized as Black within western institutions, in conversation with Black feminist understandings of self-determination (McKittrick 2015; Wynter, 2003), construed as a movement towards who Black folks are outside of the white gaze (Morrison, 1992/2007). This outsider (Collins, 1996) positionality expands the ways of knowing of Black teachers to include philosophical orientations outside of the Greco-Roman tradition and grounded in Kemetic consciousness, which argues that neither science nor philosophy are universal as the Western intellectual project (Carruthers, 2013) suggests. In this way, we are able to build a framework for understanding the development of *Hemispheric Black Language Pedagogies* and practices within these Black Spanish teachers’ classroom spaces enveloping diasporic realities, and ultimately make suggestions for future teachers who wish to combat antiBlackness in Spanish language contexts.

We argue that the development of *Hemispheric Black Language Pedagogies* is achieved through the primary principle of Maat, the ancient Kemetic concept which simplified encompasses “universal balance, cosmic regulation, justice [and] truth” (Tisdale, 2013, p. 63). Allen (2000) contends that Maat is, in short, “the way things ought to be” (p. 119). We conceive of the way Black Spanish teachers contend with the negative forces of linguistic pushout through Maat, as they strive to restore balance for themselves and for Black Spanish learners in order to make things “as they ought to be” (Allen, 2000). As a preliminary qualitative incursion into the navigational strategies described by the participants in this study, we understand these collective approaches as *Hemispheric Black Language Pedagogies* in that they resist the colonial frames of power which make Spanish language learning experiences hostile for Black peoples.

Methods

Authors’ positionality statements

Aris identifies as a multilingual Black woman, who has French language heritage and who first acquired Spanish in an immersive home study situation when she was 19 years old. She taught

English in a bilingual primary school in Madrid, Spain for several years where she became aware of the difficulties in promoting bilingualism through restrictive and antiquated classroom pedagogies. As a high school Spanish teacher in Brooklyn, she began to understand how the racialization of certain students shaped their classroom experiences. As a result, she has dedicated much of her research activity to attending to the needs of Black language teachers and learners.

Tasha is a bilingual multidialectal Black woman who contested systematic barriers to language study from elementary school through her three post-graduate degrees. In earning her WL K-12 teaching certificate through immersive study in València, Spain and certification at a U.S. institution, she taught heritage Spanish users at the middle and secondary levels for nearly a decade. She found that not only were African-descended learners absent or only in lower levels, but that those also who were present policed their own and others' Spanishes as broken or "not proper" despite their linguistic expertise.

As Spanish language learners, teachers, and users, we collectively affirm the right to one's own language in contexts of instruction (NCTE Executive Committee, 1974). Specifically, we note that teachers (as much as students) bring to their classrooms a wealth of knowledge that enhances the learning of everyone involved. Our own experiences shape the way we teach, learn, and understand the data as presented in the current study.

Data

Relying on the powerful tradition of storytelling in Black communities, our data consisted of Black teacher stories about educational trajectories, teaching philosophies, and classroom pedagogies cultivated over the course of their careers. The data were collected through two virtual interviews and two publicly available conversations between Black Spanish teachers. In the two virtual interviews, conversations explored the supports, challenges, and recommendations of three Black Spanish educators, inclusive of author one and two. Afterwards, we incorporated reflections from a public panel on Black WL teachers, focusing on three individuals who serve as public K-12 and university level Spanish language educators. Lastly, our analysis includes a podcast conversation between two Black K-12 language educators located in the same district. The podcast's central goal is to introduce potential Spanish language learners to the idea of speaking with confidence and style. Episodes included interviews with Black Spanish teachers about their paths to becoming fluent in Spanish, current events, and lessons on different variations within popular grammar topics in Spanish language classes. In total, eight Black Spanish teachers' comments were analyzed.

Participants

The focal teachers all self-identified as Black, African American, and African American and Italian. The teachers represented a range of experiences teaching Spanish in K-12 and University contexts in the U.S. and abroad. Expectedly, participants did not learn Spanish nor did they teach it within rural (Baggett, 2015; Pufahl & Rhodes, 2011) contexts as U.S. K-12 access to WLs is severely limited. As such, all teachers taught in urban contexts, with varying levels of ethno-racial representation amongst their student populations. With the exception of one person, all teachers identified as second language learners of Spanish and had learning experiences that ranged from immersive study abroad trips to primary and secondary school classroom learning. All participants self-identified as Spanish teachers, though some also taught ESL or another WL in addition to teaching Spanish. Teaching tenures ranged from 14 to 23 years of service. Each drew on their own experiences as well as those informed by Black colleagues with whom they had cultivated relationships over the years. With permission, all participants are mentioned using their real names to both give credit to the phenomenal work that they have been doing over the past twenty plus years and to attend to our concept of radical citation as Ubuntu.

Table 1. Participant profiles

Names	Self-Descriptions	Geographic Teaching Context(s)	Grade Level
Aris Clemons	Black	(Madrid) Spain, (Brooklyn) New York, and (Knoxville) Tennessee	High School and College
Tasha Austin	Black	(Hoboken; Jersey City) New Jersey	Middle and High School
Kia London	Black	(Chicago) Illinois	Elementary School
Ebony Thornton	African American	(Gwinnett County) Georgia	Middle and High School
L.J. Randolph	Black	(Chapel Hill and Wilmington) North Carolina, (Madison) Wisconsin	High School and College
Jessie Feliz	Black	(Baltimore) Maryland, (Detroit) Michigan, Costa Rica	Elementary School
Regina O’Neal	African American/Irish	(Baltimore) Maryland	High School
Jerry Parker	Black	Louisiana	K-16

Analysis

As the maintenance of a critical stance is central to Black feminist work, the analysis below rejects the devaluation of Black womanhood as a form of social control (hooks, 1981) and instead elevates our lived experiences as a meaningful and necessary link between our practice and theory for the sake of our collective liberation (hooks, 2014; Hull et al., 1982). We used a grounded theory approach to conduct a thematic analysis of the interview and podcast data. Because the authors themselves were involved in both the production and coding of data, as participants and analytic agents, thematic generation was not only grounded in Black epistemological practices that privilege moments of Black humanity but also in an intuition born of firsthand experience. This being said, we attempted to understand underlying structural systems that would impact the behaviors and beliefs of the teachers presented. Each author read through the transcripts and selected salient quotes that drove the conversation forward. Afterwards, we discussed potential themes present in those quotes and decided on five overarching themes present in the data: (1) Resistance; (2) Ubuntu; (3) Administrative; (4) Context; (5) Black languaging practices. Definitions of all themes can be found in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Thematic analysis of interview data

Theme (Tokens)	Description
Resistance (89)	Statements about strategies of resistance and how these possibly turn into pedagogies of love or care for Black people who end up as educators.
Ubuntu (60)	Statements about how Black scholars big each other up, while making their efforts accessible to other educators and students.
Administrative (50)	Statements about navigating any institutional situation
Context (47)	Statements about language pedagogy and practice as connected to local community/specialized context
Black languaging practices (33)	All topics dealing with the integration of known Black language processes, varieties, and materials.

We present the following excerpts as a representation of the restorative energy of Maat for Black language teachers. Each example demonstrates balancing through the juxtaposition of resistance to Ubuntu—represented thematically as, (1) Locating ourselves locally and globally and (2) Developing Hemispheric Black Language Pedagogies. The first theme constitutes the

foundational grounding required for self-determination—locating oneself and one’s humanity despite societal and institutional displacement, and the second theme reflects the actions that follow this self-determining pursuit wherein “self” is always completed in the greater “we” of the people.

Locating ourselves locally and globally

Locating and valuing local languaging

The primary site of contention for the Black Spanish teachers was a local one. With regards to Black languaging and culture, the teachers frequently referred to that which they already knew (and had access to) as valuable and worth exploring. In reflecting on her path towards fluency, Tasha retrospectively acknowledges her exposure to U.S. Southern and Gullah Geechee languaging through her Baptist church upbringing, and the value of those practices she had access to outside of the classroom.

And I say that because backwards looking now, I can say how many kinds of languaging I was exposed to, when I didn't realize that’s what I was getting. So probably officially I would have said, I started taking Latin in the seventh grade, but prior to that [I have to acknowledge], all the different forms of languaging that were in my own home and in my neighborhood.

She chides that “officially” Latin would have been one of her earliest language explorations, but that truly the value could be found in her “own home and in [her] neighborhood” —an *ubuntu* approach that prioritizes her social and cultural networks (Makalela, 2018) rather than the Greco-Roman tradition centered in formal U.S. schooling. Similarly, in discussing the success and challenges of formalized language learning, Aris rejected the testing culture that invisibilized her language practices.

...that is this idea of like my home language is not valuable enough to even be tested in it in a real way, or for it to even be taken seriously. So, then I never go on to study it in college or get certified, so that I can’t actually use it as a market tool on this market that has this neoliberal [system] that uses language as a tool ...

Aris’s reflection that for her language ways, there were no offerings “to even be tested in it in a real way” echo what wa Thiong’o (1992) calls colonial alienation—when the language of schooling is divorced from those of the home and community. The varieties of French, Swahili, and English she had known through her African-centered education were not reflected after her pre-elementary years in schools. The added challenge of resisting the neoliberal norm of equating “market value” with the inherent importance of her languaging (Heller, 2010; Shin,

2016) reflects an attempt to reckon with the erasure of syncretic Black cultural realities in educational spaces. The insistence that Black language practices are valid extended to Ebony's reflection about the regional dialects within English that, too, represent culturally and linguistically rich Black communities.

Regional dialects are important. So even if you say, "Okay hey guys you know how here in the South we say soda if you have a student from up north or from Michigan they're going to say pop. Just know they're talking about a soft drink. It's the same kind of thing like not everybody says '*estacionar el auto*' to say park the car they say '*parquear el carro*'"...

Ebony draws from her critical language awareness in English varieties to demonstrate the value of honoring linguistic variations in Spanish. She acknowledges the distinct yet equally effective modes of discussing "soda" as "pop" and compares it to the Spanish "*estacionar el auto*" versus "*parquear el carro*." Tasha, Aris, and Ebony advance Maat in balancing the erasure and devaluing of fluid languaging by offering their experiential and localized expertise to how they conceive of language instruction inclusive of Spanish. Still, language teaching also centers on the localized cultures of those who practice the craft as reflected in the excerpts below.

Locating Blackness in global and local cultures

Within the lifeways of the participants, they recalled their own experiences to attest to the value of their language practices. At the same time, they recalled important opportunities to connect those practices to the African diaspora. For many of the teachers, contextualizing language learning for their students meant attending to both the global and local as relevant. The global context informed not only the modern connections to Black Spanish users across the globe, but also to ancestral memory that ties these communities together. On the other hand, the local focus grounded students to language learning as necessary for growth and participation in their own languaging communities. Kia remembers the first time she realized African peoples were connected around the globe through the kidnapping and selling of enslaved Africans during what has been called the transatlantic slave trade.

I took a course. It was actually on the African diaspora believe it or not [...] And I'll never forget we were studying the African diaspora and she started talking about the history of just our Afro descendants as far as the transatlantic slave trade goes in terms of how [...] our ancestors were all, you know, dispersed and transported into different places in the Americas. And it wasn't until then, where I was like whoa, like okay, so that means that this language is like in my bloodline and that was really an eye-opener for me.

Kia's reflection of her encounter with herself through a college level elective course was one that made her feel the Spanish "language was in her bloodline." This legitimizing force helped her see her connection to Spanish but also to diasporic Africans. L.J. had a similar first-time experience that left an indelible mark on his understandings at the intersection of Blackness and Spanish.

But this was the first time that I remember seeing like Black, you know, art, Black songs, Black poetry that was written in Spanish about the Black experience from the people who produced it and I just felt cheated. I felt like I did not know that this part of my identity was so prevalent, and it really is. It's so prevalent in the Spanish speaking world.

Through art and multimodal texts, L.J. was ushered into the knowledge that the Black experience is accessible through the Spanish language. In addition to feeling more connected to the Spanish language, his late discovery made him feel "cheated" in terms of coming to this realization. Direct instruction did not account for every participant's ability to self-locate within an expansive diasporic Blackness. Tasha expounds on how she herself embodies Black culture from which she could teach.

So, the challenge for me was coming to terms with like if I don't learn enough about the fact that Black Americans have culture, too, Black Americans have language, too! And I had to go figure it out for myself. Nobody was gonna tell me that, right? But it was the only, I don't wanna say defense, but it was the only sustaining mechanism that could keep me able to do my work in WL spaces[...] that we're armed with textbooks and tutorials that just reinforced the notion that every/ certain people had to be given language and culture right and other people could pick them up and put them in their pocket as like adornments and extras, right?

Though there was no guidance or preparation to which she refers, Tasha expresses her ability to "sustain" her teaching was based on affirming that "Black Americans have culture, too [and that] Black Americans have language too!" Her autodidactic approach to studying Black American culture represents a resistance echoed by additional participants. One example is how Aris draws from her experiences with Black multilingual immigrants to insist that language instruction be humanizing for all.

One of the like, the things that inspires me in language that keeps me going is, is humanity, right? Is this kind of this base understanding from moving around a lot, from having immigrant family, from going to places that are uncomfortable to me, this base understanding that families that do things very differently often [pause] want to be seen. They want joy. They want to take care of their family. They want shelter. They want to

eat. They want to celebrate, in whatever ways that that comes. And that is, like, uniquely human. And every single person, no matter how you do it, wants that. And so how do we come together to show the humanity, right? And I think that language and language learning is a way to have entrance into the humanity of different kinds of people.

Aris projects the experiences of her family onto language learning contexts in insisting that from that lens, “language learning is a way to have entrance into the humanity of different kinds of people.” She draws from the discomforts of traveling as a Black U.S. citizen to study in Spain to conclude that Black cultural experiences can be used to unite people through language learning. In recognizing linguistic and cultural value through a Black cultural and African diasporic understanding, the participants gesture towards how they allow context to also guide their pedagogical decisions.

Bringing balance through Black languaging pedagogies

The previous excerpts highlight the realizations the participants had, often outside of institutional contexts, which framed their approaches to teaching Spanish. The following examples demonstrate how those insights fueled the pursuit of just language instruction for the participants within their institutional practice. For example, Aris discusses how corrective tendencies within classroom spaces cause stigmatization, and how she confronts this tendency through her work.

...in terms of my work, like the idea that I see corrections happen, and kids be so um [pause] befuddled because it’s like, “what do you mean this is wrong? My grandmother speaks this way, right? What do you mean? This is wrong. My mother speaks this way.” Like, if it functions in this/ in my household, how is it wrong? And how that then impacted them seeing themselves as wrong, right? Because if that means, if their language is wrong and everybody in their family uses it, then what does that say about them, and their identity? And who they are? All of that stuff! So that is what keeps me going. To get/to give people the tools to critique the stigmatization of their own languages.

Unlike L.J. and Kia, Aris is deriving her sense of language “correctness” from her multilingual home context and applying the same humanizing expectation to her practice. She rhetorically poses the question that if languaging with one’s family is “wrong” then “what does that say about them and their identity?” Like Aris, Ebony considers herself fortunate to leverage her role, in this case as a department head, to argue for representations that reflect the large African American population within her district.

I'm very fortunate about that. I get to do that a lot in my school system. My content team and my department is when I say[...] something as simple as when you're introducing vocabulary and you use a phrase like *estar de moda* feature well-dressed Black women instead of just some cute blonde girls at the mall, you know? That is something you can do when you are uh wanting to when you're wanting to incorporate it and then giving your students a chance to always see themselves. When we see it, we can visualize. When you visualize it, you can make it happen.

Aris and Ebony offer linguistic and cultural infusions of Blackness, respectively, countering the dehumanizing contexts that often proliferate Spanish language classrooms through erasing Black languaging and cultures—a direct application of the sense of moral obligation Maat requires (Obenga, 2004). Ebony insists on featuring “a well-dressed Black woman” so that students can “visualize” Black Spanish users and thereby become them through practice and study. The curriculum and instruction, however, can only be applied with Black students if they are in the room. Ebony also uses her position to rally against the inequitable access for Black students in a largely Black district to WLs in general, particularly at advanced levels.

And then um probably a challenge [...]my school is facing head-on is making sure that there is access for all of our students to take upper levels of language. Because what you know we do not want in my school one of the things that my principal is adamant about is if my school population is 55 [%] African American my/our AP classes should reflect that. And in some schools... you're if...I hate saying the phrase “gen pop”, but it/that's kind of how it feels- it feels like you have your one segment of your student population and you have your overall set of demographics but in the other classes, your honor classes, your gifted classes, your AP classes, it doesn't look like that.

The unequal distribution of students who can take WLs in general is not responsive to the community context that Ebony describes. She is not only dissatisfied with Black representation in WLs, but also within “gifted classes” and “AP classes.” The presence of the students, she feels, should also be met with an *Ubuntu* understanding of languaging that reflects a common human bond (Makalela, 2018; Somet, 2023) through community practices.

The community that I teach, especially if there is a large Cuban or Dominican population, and all they're learning... and don't get me wrong, I love Castilian Spanish. But *why* are they learning? Why are they learning *vosotros*? They're not going to use *vosotros*...

The varieties of Spanish Ebony asserts must be honored are those that are within the local community. She “love[s] Castilian Spanish” but calls for the language forms that are organic to the “Cuban or Dominican population.” Aris similarly argues that students should be “co-

conspirators” in their language journeys since, “[i]t’s not about acquiring discrete linguistic forms, right? It’s about allowing people to create worlds and expand worlds, right?”

Black students’ entry into Spanish classrooms that are then bolstered by teaching approaches that honor Blackness and localized language practices constitute a means of restoring balance to a racially stratified world and discipline. These pedagogies are not often housed in teacher preparation programs or curricula. Tasha highlights the inventive nature of restoring order to Spanish language teaching.

[I]’ve never been trained to use a book anyway. I’ve always taught from who I am and so if all those stories are already in me [pause] I am a deeply cultural being, right? So that, that learning that I cast as a challenge is also a wild benefit.

Tasha sees the lack of training to teach through a diasporically representative lens, when coupled with the absence of a text with which to ground such an approach, as a “wild benefit” in the pursuit of humanizing Blackness. Her approach centers on the fact that she considers herself “deeply cultural” and therefore, a resource for instruction. Students too are resources in orienting Spanish language teaching through localized cultural relevance. Jerry explains this very understanding in calling for more congruence in the techniques Spanish teachers employ.

[A]ll language teachers you need to understand that we are no longer teaching in 1980. Okay? We are in 2022 your classrooms are filled with diverse groups of learners. You are teaching future doctors, future lawyers ,future TikTok [...] influencers, [...]Instagram models. You are teaching future business owners via Instagram. You’re gonna teach coders, you’re going to teach every single thing under the sun. Foreign language is not reserved for the elite that are going to college anymore. Every student in your class deserves the right to be fluent in a foreign language.

Jerry calls on all Spanish teachers to update their teaching approaches in recognition that “we are no longer teaching in 1980.” He signals that the present strategies imagine Spanish students to be “elite” rather than “future Tik Tok influencers” or “Instagram models” while arguing that Spanish or any world language learning is for all the aforementioned professionals.

Through inward and external exploration whether aided by instructors or realized through home and community engagement—the participants inject humanity based on a need to restore order to the teaching of Spanish for the sake of building harmonious futures both in and outside of the classroom. Linguistically and culturally, they identify diasporic themes in their experiences and those studied then insist that those themes appear in the classroom. Through learning about their own cultural ways of being, they expand opportunities for Spanish learners by aligning with them to determine linguistic ends in which the students find value. In the section that

follows, we outline how the participants develop Hemispheric Black Language Pedagogies through political awareness and a critical assessment of the potential for Spanish language learning.

Developing Hemispheric Black Language Pedagogies

The following comments demonstrate the tensions that Black language teachers must confront when navigating the varying institutions and contexts in which they find themselves. Austin argues that a primary component of linguistic pushout is reckoning with overt racism (Anya & Randolph, 2019) towards Black students (Austin, 2022) as they encounter it in language study. This violence extends to Black Spanish teachers as well. One example of this struggle is highlighted in Regina's discussion of one antiBlack popular cultural reference in Latin America she sought to refute.

That's where I analyze perspectives of Blackness in Latin American countries, and I talk about a certain character. His name is Memín Pinguín and he is a cartoon character from Mexico. And um he was, he is drawn as a monkey, but all of his classmates are drawn as white regular human children. You see what I'm saying? So, no one will say 'oh my God this is how we see Black people', but they'll draw it this way.

Regina's unwillingness to ignore the depictions of Black people as monkeys served to confront blatant racism against Black people in Spanish cultural representations. Regina is also explicit in noting the ways that Black children are often devalued and positioned as ineligible for quality instruction within educational contexts. In having to confront the racist depictions of Blackness within the available and often called upon Spanish classroom materials, Regina admonishes educators to reframe the way they see Black students in the classroom.

...and and really start looking at our kids differently please...you know what I mean? Much like you said, don't look at my son as someone that you have to save. Don't look at him as a threat. Look at him as your future president. Look at him as a future heart surgeon or whatever it is that he decides he wants to be. Look at him as a contribution to humanity just like you would look at your own son, you know? And that's something that we need to take into consideration for real though.

In many of these cases, Black children may have themselves taken on these ideologies of deficiency that result in a contestation of overt racism. In this case, Black Spanish teachers have to navigate overt racism from students who have internalized antiBlackness. This was the case for Tasha, who while teaching in the state of New Jersey, often witnessed and experienced overt racism from her students.

So that was my experience in my first 5 years of teaching/ is that I was teaching to heritage speakers, who overwhelmingly were antiBlack. Like, I had Dominican students who would say like, you know, Black people are monkeys, [Dominican students] oftentimes looking very much like me.

This experience was particularly troubling as Tasha was the only African American in the space, making the assertion a clear move towards boundary creation between those who may have identified themselves as Latinx, Hispanic, or Mixed but who also may have been marked as Black by hegemonic forces in the U.S.

Another tenet of linguistic pushout refers to native speakerism and idealized whiteness, or what Flores describes as “what the ideal White person should be and act like in terms of his or her look [...] language practices, and so on” (2016, p. 15) ever present in language curricula. Regina’s insistence on the humanity of Black children and their inclusion within approaches that assume their potential as among those who can be a “future president” or “surgeon” speaks to the need of Black Spanish teachers to defy constant Black dehumanization inherent in idealized whiteness. The material effects of who is perceived as a legitimate authority on the Spanish language extends to the administrative moves necessary to make the enactment of Hemispheric Black Language Pedagogies possible. The participants, for example, often had to achieve a certain level of success or work with a school administration that would support them in their innovative approaches.

Strategies for the development of Hemispheric Black Language Pedagogies

When we asked the teachers what advice they had for WL educators and administrators, they overwhelmingly commented on the need to listen to Black teachers. Herein, we note the ways in which the participants leverage their relative power within their institutional roles in the development of political and pedagogical praxes, commenting on the administrative structures that require strategic approaches in the first place. Since Black language teachers are often tasked with confronting ideologically opposed administrators, the classroom itself becomes the space to make critical decisions that speak directly to antiBlack linguistic racism and help their students (and themselves) move toward Black self-determination. Within this endeavor, participants often noted the tension between recognizing their classrooms as authoritative languaging spaces and recognizing the language users within the local communities as authentic, and thus also authoritative. This tendency to bring the community into their classrooms more practically guides L.J.’s approach to exposing Spanish language learners to Black varieties alongside those with supposed prestige.

Um but I, I try in my own classes with my language students to present as many varieties of the language as possible and not as um you know kind of okay now we're going to look at this different thing in Spanish. It's like no, this is valid, this is part of the curriculum. I'm going to present it with the same level of care and with the same level of nuance and study as we do like Don Quixote or Cervantes or something like that...so just incorporating that more in the class and helping students see that it's not just it's not quote unquote bad Spanish, it's rule governed and in many cases it makes more sense because its more/ I think the language a lot of times is more evolved because it's had that freedom to change a little bit more than than what we consider it to be the standard dialects of the language both in Spanish and English.

In restoring the elevated status of Black varieties alongside those represented in “Don Quixote or Cervantes,” L.J. brings balance to how Spanish learners encounter dynamic language practices in the world creating alignment with its classroom representations. This restorative act of depicting how Spanish is practiced by Black people constitutes a pedagogical orientation towards accurately portraying language varieties as they are used in the world. L.J.’s approach directly mitigates the third and final component of linguistic pushout (Austin, 2022)—the absence of the cultural, historical and critical realities of Black people in language, curricula, and practices. As such, Jessie reflects on the measured effort creating these learning opportunities requires and how the term “lesson *plans*” for her became “slightly tainted” as the depth of what they accomplish is not achieved in the “superficial[ity]” of what must be submitted to “academic administrators.”

Creating lesson plans that incorporated Black ways of knowing and Black histories as opposed to moving through an ordered approach towards memorizing standard grammatical features is central in mobilizing Hemispheric Black Language Pedagogies toward self-determination. For L.J., moving lessons beyond both the white gaze and the linear conception of WL sequencing drove his development of an activity that placed a Black Spanish in conversation with a Black English. In this way, L.J. normalized Black languaging as possible and exemplary.

I present that in class, and you know we will look at a poem by Nicolás Guillen, from his collection of poetry “*motivos de son,*” which he explicitly wrote using the Afro-Cuban dialect at that time. And one of the things that I do with that in particular is we then compare that to one of Langston Hughes poems, which I think he called “Thick-lipped colored boy” where he did a translation of Nicolás Guillén’s “*negro bembón*” and tried to write it using Black English. And so, we look at that and we look for patterns and not only the patterns but also the content: what are they trying to say? What’s the voice here? And so [...] when students come out of the classroom, they will have developed a more inclusive ideology about the varieties that they speak as well as the

varieties that other people speak, so they don't come out having, you know, these thoughts associated with traditionally stigmatized language varieties.

For Black students, the language learning classroom serves as a space not only for the supposed acquisition of linguistic features but also knowledges that help them in their endeavors to survive systems of white supremacy and antiBlackness. As such, teachers who are interested in redressing the harms caused by traditional language learning institutions must be intentional about connecting their lessons to the worlds that their students will navigate as language users so that they recognize their interconnected experiences. This compassion and collectivity are reflected in Jessie's unprompted recitation of the AfroColombian vice president Francia Marquez' campaign slogan “*¡Soy porque somos! We are all in this together!*” as she shared resources and ideas to this end with Regina. For Tasha, creating these connections in her Spanish class was a way to move beyond Spanish as a subject.

So, so the buzz that started coming out of my room, not only was I not crying and running, but students were excited. They were using Spanish in other classes, they were because it's my nature to integrate it. Like Spanish for me was never a subject. Spanish was a part of my world. So, I didn't teach it like a subject. I would know that they were studying World War 2, and I would incorporate the Spanish Civil War, things of that nature, because I knew that it needed to connect to what they were doing the class before or the class after. I knew that they were doing Impressionism, so I bring in the Spanish artists and have them do a gallery walk and give like emotive reactions to one another's art. Now I was doing this with like self-contained students who, you know what it is[...] nobody asked them how they felt about art.

Tasha, like Jerry, Ebony, Aris, L.J., Regina, Jessie and Kia, using her grounding in the potential of language learning as a connective means for understanding herself and the world, drew upon contextualized goals in other disciplines to create schematic inroads for learners. She, like Ebony, highlights the importance of equitable access to Spanish learning in that “self-contained students” were not asked how they felt “about art”, suggesting that Spanish teaching could restore to the students this equitable and humanizing opportunity while supporting their overall scholastic achievement.

Based on approaches consistently taken up by these teachers, we offer four strategies as suggestions for educators interested in creating more critical language learning spaces for their students.

1. Find and use language materials that are grounded in the everyday lives, experiences, and worlds of Afro-descended Latin Americans and Black Latinx populations in the U.S. and globally.
2. Bring your students' families, linguistic communities, or previous knowledges into the classroom as additional texts and realia from which they can learn to develop additional linguistic skills.
3. Make Spanish classes part of overall learning experiences, rather than a bounded class with only linguistic knowledge as the target philosophy.
4. Encourage Spanish language educators, particularly of Black and marginalized communities to draw from their cultural plurality as a strength in their pedagogies to dislodge monocultural white norms (Austin, 2023).

As each classroom context differs from the next, we argue that all teachers must strive for Maat, balancing the needs of students within the socio-historical realities of the Spanish language and Spanish language classrooms, and most importantly combatting the antiBlack racism that has permeated World Language education in the United States.

Conclusion

The duality represented in the data demonstrated that the Black Spanish teacher participants overwhelmingly navigated their practice through resistance and the West African principle of Ubuntu—I am because we are—or the essence of humanity (Makalela, 2018) and compassion. Within this duality they expressed that the context in which they found themselves, the administrative power they did or did not possess and the Black languaging practices they utilized enabled them to provide a counterbalance of humanizing instruction in spite of dehumanizing circumstances. This energy is tantamount to a restoration of order, or Maat—the guiding principle Kemetic Middle Egyptians recognized as necessary for life to thrive encompassing harmony, balance, justice, and unity. Through these Black language pedagogical approaches, they envisioned the future success of their students by expanding their worldviews as demonstrated through innovative teaching pedagogies and practices.

While this article focused on eight veteran teachers, more work could be done to reveal how Black teachers are being recruited (Austin & Kearney, 2022) and prepared in WL teacher education programs. Additionally, and thinking about the long-standing presence of Spanish speakers in rural areas of the U.S., our contribution does little to attend to those contexts as we attempt to define the world-making practices Black teachers engage in their classrooms.

Nonetheless, the current article represents a potential path forward, focusing on the ways that Black teachers confront the unique challenges that they face as a result of their language learning journeys and their subject positionality within overarching white supremacist educational structures. We take pride in representing the agency within these teachers' stories as they represent an African optimism (Diop, 1989) that gives meaning to the actions that many Black teachers take outside the confines of set curricula, pedagogies, and educational trends that promote and maintain antiBlack linguistic racism in classroom spaces.

These Black Spanish teachers' labor-intensive efforts reflect a commitment to strive for just classrooms with hopes of societal harmony far beyond those confines. Where necessary, the participants used their leadership roles to navigate antiBlack structures and remix curricula to center Blackness in their teaching for the benefit of their students. In their defense of Blackness, they consistently humanized Afrodiasporic peoples by celebrating linguistic diversity and expanding their own worldviews and those of their students. In their dedication to the success of future generations of language learners, they drew upon historical facts about Black peoples often obscured in formal schooling institutions and centered their approaches on the local needs and strengths of the Black diasporic communities in which they taught. Through expanding notions of Blackness and Black language practices, the participants situated Spanish languaging within enactments shaped by global colonial and imperial influence. AS such, we assert that these Hemispheric Black Language Pedagogies are critical for countering linguistic pushout and activating critical race pedagogies in the teaching of Spanish particularly in a U.S. context.

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