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## INTRODUCTION TO *CMS* 5.2 **LEGITIMATE SPEAKERS IN CONTESTED SPACES**

At the 2015 American Comparative Literature Association's annual meeting, a group of linguistic and literary scholars came together to examine questions of voice, legitimacy, and positionalities in complicated spaces. During a three-day panel entitled "Legitimate Voices in Contested Spaces," participants examined, critiqued, and debated the ways in which speakers negotiated their subject positionings as users of additional languages (L2) in spaces that might not have been comfortably their own. Panelists presented literary or applied linguistic research that featured multilingual language users in study, work, immigration, and/or transnational contexts. Sourcing from an array of texts and text types, presenters sought to draw connections and address gaps that exist within their respective literary and linguistic disciplines.

At least, that was the goal in a general sense. These scholars were also united in bridging the artificially constructed gap between literary studies and linguistic research. In a very broad way, the academic memberships of the panel's participants symbolized a certain separatism in the language and literature world: Most belonged to the American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA), all carried Modern Language Association (MLA) cards, and a few identified as members of the American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL). These partisanships are significant because they speak to an ongoing and growing critical awareness that there need not be an aisle that separates language and literary scholars / instructors. Rather, we can gather at a table, engaged by an interdisciplinary theme, and use our own

multilingual data and texts to examine critically questions of identification processes, speaker legitimacy, and (un)safe spaces.

In some ways, the presenters on this panel seized the occasion of this unique sort of scholarly gathering and intragroup curiosity to demonstrate further the Modern Language Association's (2007) call for "foreign language faculty members [to work] in creative ways to cross disciplinary boundaries, incorporate the study of all kinds of material in addition to the strictly literary, and promote wide cultural understanding through research and teaching." The manuscripts that form this special issue of *Critical Multilingualism Studies* present innovative applied linguistic, literary, and cultural studies scholarship. Their authors examine identity construction through language use in a variety of cultural and historical contexts that cross time and space: francophone, Latin American, Mediterranean, early modern, and postcolonial, among others. The contributors explore how phenomena such as language revitalization, heritage language learning, code-switching, and postcolonial population flows can disrupt the colonial legacy of a center-periphery binary. National identities become transnational, official languages are parodied or subverted, and stories of migration and exile take on a paramount importance for the multilingual speakers featured in the studies. Regional renaissances, intercontinental genealogies, and diasporic constellations fashion new geographies of linguistic legitimacy that the authors trace in detail.

The manuscripts cross entrenched disciplinary boundaries: between literature and linguistics, and between research and pedagogy. This interdisciplinary approach to literary texts and discourse communities is informed by the contributors' experiences as teachers of language in a variety of settings. Here, conceptions of literature, literacy, and language proficiency are profoundly intertwined rather than separate (Kern 2000; Kramsch 2009: 195–97). Scholarship on embodied learning and the sociolinguistics of the foreign language classroom has reframed the accepted view of foreign language students: rather than passive vessels of information or rote repeaters of memorized bits of dialogue, language learners in the 21st century are seen as subjects who bring a wide array of linguistic and cultural experiences to bear on their negotiation of meaning within the classroom. In a parallel way, the articles approach language speakers, both real-world subjects and literary figures, as multilingual speakers engaged in the mediation of meaning—and, by extension, politics and identity—across linguistic and cultural codes. The multilingual subjects analyzed in this issue, like the students discussed in Claire Kramsch's 2009 *The Multilingual Subject: What Foreign Language Learners Say about their Experience and Why it Matters*, demonstrate different forms of translingual/transcultural competence that can inform teaching strategies in real language and literature classrooms. The

authors in this issue offer approaches to the study of language, both in artistic utterances and in everyday speech, that echo the dialogical dynamics of the language classroom, and they write with an eye to enriching it. This emphasis answers the professional call for teachers and researchers to “bring into the classroom the full breadth of their knowledge of the society about which they teach, including that society’s languages and language variants, literatures, and cultures” (Geisler et al. 2000: 5).

The question of a multilingual narrator’s or speaker’s legitimacy continues to stoke the interest of literary scholars and applied linguists. Operating in liminal spaces, multilingual figures, in literature as in history, represent the quintessential marginality of subjects operating between languages and cultures. For instance, La Malinche, the sixteenth-century Nahua woman who would become Hernán Cortés’s slave, interpreter, and mother to his son in Mexico, occupied the fluid spaces of the contact zone, a position that has rendered her a deeply ambiguous figure in the Mexican imaginary. But while her biography is familiar to many critics in the fields of early modern literature and cultural studies, she—like other historical multilingual subjects—has elicited relatively little interest from linguistics scholars. Heidenfeldt (2015) took up this question of Malinche’s legitimacy as a multilingual subject together alongside an L2 Spanish teacher’s changing positionalities, arguing that rich linguistic repertoires involving different linguistic codes and registers provided different degrees of power in constrained environments. Heidenfeldt called for further research that focused on the personal and biographical narratives of multilingual subjects, to which the authors in this issue have responded.

In taking up this work, the authors employ methodologies that cross disciplinary borders. For instance, Livi Yoshioka-Maxwell uses critical discourse analysis (a methodological tool most often associated with critical applied linguistics) to examine how, through both standard and “aberrant” uses of hexagonal French, the protagonist of Swiss-Gabonese author Bessora’s 1999 novel *53 cm* reconstructs and subverts to some degree shifting power roles and structures. In another contribution, Elyse Ritchey uses foundational texts from sociology and cultural studies (such as Anderson 1991) to frame an ongoing examination of speaker legitimacy in language revitalization efforts by focusing on the case of multiculturalism in the Occitan movement. In their contributions, these authors interrogate the idea of “nation” and “borders,” focusing on linguistic repertoire as a tool to pry open any fixed, closed notions of those terms. In doing so, they also point to speaker agency, even if constrained, as a way for speakers to make a symbolic play for legitimacy status.

In this special issue, scholars from different disciplines examine similar questions of legitimacy as it is constructed through narratives of multilingual subjects. Beginning with the notion of language use as a dynamic process involving ongoing power struggles (Fairclough 2013), we consider Pierre Bourdieu's (1991, Thompson, transl.) explication of the notion of legitimate language, that is the code(s) which speakers can use to "impose [...] as the only legitimate one in the formal markets (the fashionable, educational, political and administrative markets) and in most of the linguistic interactions in which they are involved" (57). Bourdieu argues further that possessing these codes and knowing how and when to use these codes are contingent upon a "competitive struggle," which reminds language users that there is an inequality in the struggle: Through linguistic excellence (i.e., distinction and correctness), language users work to gain or to maintain this linguistic capital, this possession that grants them social access and desired status. As we shall see in several articles in this issue of *CMS*, notably in Ritchey, Smith and Yoshioka-Maxwell, the search for a kind of correctness—of one certain, socially contingent way of using language, which usually comes at the hands of recognized institutions—falls inevitably to individual speakers, whose subjectivities enact or resist systems of power.

The authors in this volume then work with the central notion of a *subject* as "a symbolic entity that is constituted and maintained through symbolic systems such as language." (Kramsch 2009: 17). "It is not given," continues Kramsch, "but has to be consciously constructed against the backdrop of natural and social forces that both bring it into being and threaten to destroy its freedom and autonomy." Implicit in Kramsch's definition are systems of power, tension, and inequality in the construction of the subject through language use. In exploring identity construction through language use, these authors respond to questions such as the following: What does it mean to be a legitimate speaker of any language? How does the act of narrativizing a subject's life offer opportunities for critical self-reflexivity? The interdisciplinary dimensions of this research respond to the need for new categories for understanding the relationship between linguistics and literature, a problematic that crystallizes around the question of linguistic legitimacy.

Antonio Rueda looks closely at literary representations of the identity construction and the linguistic development of Black African female slaves during the early modern colonial period. Although there are indeed thorough studies on the representation of Black African slaves in early modern Spanish literature, a comparative diachronic analysis of their figuration by way of specific linguistic characterization has still been outstanding. Rueda investigates theatrical plays by Rodrigo de Reynosa (1520s), Lope de Rueda (1550s) and Lope de Vega

(early 17th century), as case studies to show how sociolinguistic features shape the behavior of these literary representations of women who, taken together, constitute a complex emblem of the growth of the Afro-Hispanic population, as well as a changing notion of ethnicity and linguistic legitimacy, in early modern Europe. The transformation of theater in Spain with regards to Black African female characters moves from the image of the *bozal*, a slave who spoke Spanish with a strong African influence and was designed as a comic type, to the *mulata*, a complex and ambiguous character who exemplifies the urban demographic change that had taken place by the early seventeenth century and whose linguistic skills were the result of a solid Afro-Hispanic identity.

Postcolonial realities and racialized linguistic identities are powerful and possibly destabilizing factors in Maya Angela Smith's study. Through data gathered from participants and teachers in the New York City branch of the French Heritage Language Program, including sociolinguistic interviews, classroom observations, surveys, and materials created by students, Smith explores how participants in this program understand their own identity formation. More specifically, Smith investigates the reasons why students are learning French, their attitudes toward French and other languages, and their relationship to their countries of origin as well as to the French government's interest in language acquisition among people from its former colonies. At the intersection of second language acquisition, sociolinguistics, and identity studies, this research considers in detail how after-school heritage language programs allow not only for language learning but also community building, cultural exploration, and self-reflection.

Some of this volume's authors interrogate the linguistic and cultural traditions of particular spaces, both literal and metaphorical, in which multilingual language users test their linguistic legitimacy. For instance, drawing on the colonial roots of Mediterranean identity as imagined by Albert Camus and Gabriel Audisio, Celine Piser's article reads multilingual literature by Abdelkebir Khatibi and Assia Djebar to explore how the concept of Mediterranean identity has been reclaimed and mobilized to serve a culturally and linguistically hybrid population. This new literature refutes the linguistic and cultural boundaries imposed by nationalism while engaging critically with the French colonial mythology of Mediterranean identity. By writing in and about multiple Mediterranean languages, these authors redefine the Mediterranean region as an alternative linguistic space that can better reflect the legacy of colonialism and immigration that influences francophone literature and culture.

Similarly, Ritchey introduces parallel and intersecting timescales and external linguistic histories to examine competing discourses that surround a revitalization of Occitan. Ritchey's work deals with texts meant to publicize language and cultural events in southwestern France by referring to inclusion and openness, as well as connections between Occitan and other cultures. By interrogating certain phrases and vocabulary within a discourse analysis framework, she analyzes the way that the texts in question invite their audiences to participate in Occitan language and culture. The ways of being Occitan presented in these discourses suggest an alternative to a more rigidly construed French identity.

A number of contributions look closely at the linguistic production of their study's subjects in order to examine the subjects' claims to language use and power. Juan Caballero, for instance, explores the genres of language memoir and *Bildungsroman* in Mario Castells's 2012 playful and opaque novella, "El mosto y la queresa." Caballero reflects on the narrator's insistence on the legitimacy of the characters' dialect, mixed not just with Spanish but with the *wrong* Spanish—that Spanish acquired in the working-class immigrant milieu of Buenos Aires and smuggled back into Paraguay. Through analyzing key examples, Caballero shows the sociolinguistic, political, and historical dimensions of this pedagogically opaque, hybridized linguistic variety.

Brandon Rigby focuses his lens to a Jewish poet of non-Sephardic heritage, Juan Gelman, who appropriates Ladino as a diasporic language in the collection *Dibaxu* (1994) to represent linguistically his exile from Argentina during the Dirty War (c.1974-1983). Writing in Ladino displaces the identity created by others, permitting him to create a new identity as he actively appropriates a marginalized language instead of falling back to his native language, a language controlled by the oppressors. Rigby argues that this new linguistic identity allows him to reassert his cultural and national identity in his own terms.

Jonathon Repinecz also identifies subjects' power, however fraught, to assert their linguistic, cultural, and national identities through a comparison and contrast of two literary characters from francophone writing. The emblematic, polyglot hero of Amadou Hampâté Bâ's *The Fortunes of Wangrin* (Mali, 1973) seamlessly mediates between the cultural and linguistic entities competing for power on the colonial playing field of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century French West Africa. Wangrin's virtuosity as a speaker of many languages enables him to fool powerful European administrators time and again while pursuing his own moneymaking schemes. In a reminiscent way, the storyteller Solibo, protagonist of Patrick Chamoiseau's *Solibo Magnificent* (1988), tells stories that also display a prodigious ability to move between

languages, ranging in a single utterance from low-register or “deep” Creole to highly literate French. While Wangrin collects the languages he has acquired as a means to power, Solibo inhabits them, using them as an expression of his embeddedness in a polyvocal community. These texts enable us to think multilingualism as a reflection of the thoroughly political dimensions of unequal social relations within the particular contexts in which they are set.

These political dimensions of social inequality unify all the work in this special issue of *Critical Multilingualism Studies*. Together, these texts lay bare the very political act of thinking, speaking, writing, moving, loving, and fighting in multiple languages. Do multilingual subjects claim their power as legitimate speakers of languages? In what ways, through these subjects’ language use, does linguistic capital retain its power or have it upended? Finally, what becomes of the spaces into which multilinguals enter, either through their own agency or through external pressure? The articles that have come together in this issue offer many opportunities to consider these questions and to further investigate questions of legitimacy and multilingualism. By using interdisciplinary methodologies and fine-grained analysis, these authors illustrate the rich work that can be produced when literary scholars and linguists work across an artificial divide in order to elucidate the spaces in which subjects speak.

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