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An anti-racist English education

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ABSTRACT

In this conceptual article we offer a vision and a manifesto for an anti-racist English education, focusing particularly on language. Locating our work with anti-racist efforts in the UK, we conduct a brief historical reflection of these efforts, before turning our attention to the current politico-economic context and making a case for the urgent need for English teachers and teacher educators to commit to anti-racism within their work. We then outline what contemporary anti-racist efforts in English education might look, sound, and feel like. We argue for a greater attention to intersectional positionalities and activism in English education. We argue for anti-racist language policies which work in dialogue with other broader anti-racist efforts. We argue for the need to pay attention to specific contexts and racialised dynamics of institutions and local communities. We argue for anti-racist pedagogical stances which seek to sustain the language practices of marginalised children. Finally, we end with some clarifications and warn against seeing our manifesto as a reductive, tick-box exercise.

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Two vignettes

We begin this article with two vignettes, one of despair and one of hope. In early 2023 one of us visited the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre in Manchester Central Library with Huma, a practicing secondary school English teacher, with Pakistani heritage. We spent a day looking at a collection of materials from the 1970s which documented community-driven organising in south Manchester schools which centred issues of language in/equality. Whilst we found inspiration in the anti-racist language policies that emerged from this, we also felt deep frustration at the current state of English education in England which is undergoing a period of crisis amidst a highly prescriptive policy context and a national curriculum built to preserve the interests of whiteness (Cushing 2023b; Sriprakash, Rudolph, and Gerrard 2022; see also Badenhorst, Tanner, and Grinage 2023). Huma spoke about how she felt increasingly pushed to the margins of her school, and forced to engage with curricula, texts, state policies, assessments, and inspection procedures which she felt is actively silencing issues of race, anti-racism, and colonialism.

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At the same time, one of us works with pre-service teachers of secondary English on a longitudinal, place-based critical literacy project that engages with (de)coloniality (Govender 2019, 2023). We walk around the Doulton Fountain at Glasgow Green. There is chatter, writing, pointing, laughing, serious expressions – a myriad of (re)actions to/with/around the fountain. I am one of two People of Colour present (the other person being a pre-service teacher), out of a class of 84. One pre-service teacher, Simon, sees a metaphor in the fountain:

> The falling water suggests that Victoria/The Empire is benevolently raining down riches, life, and happiness on her colonial subjects. In fact, since it's a fountain all the water at the bottom is getting sucked back up to the top.

While another student, Chukwudi, writes notes about how online information texts about the fountain consistently hedge around the violence of colonialism by foregrounding some facts over others:

- Much of the passage is concerned up with facts and figures about the fountain's physical qualities; production; exhibition; repair; etc.
- The fountain is presented in an unambiguously positive light. The phrase "in all its glory" has connotations of pride, admiration and power, and the description of Queen Victoria "gazing out over Glasgow Green" suggests to me almost a benevolent fairytale queen gazing upon her kingdom.
- The passage completely ignores the bloody and brutal reality of imperialism. The victims of the Raj, the Opium Wars, etc. are not mentioned.
- There's also something slightly ghoulish about the phrase "the diversity of the empire".

In each case, the teachers find powerful ways to read and re-read the monument, tracing those meanings across linguistic devices, figurative devices, multiple genres and modes, and across multiple perspectives. It is in this matrix of meaning-making that they/we generate questions about power and race, the role of language and literacy in not only exposing social issues but also engaging in redesign for more socially just representation (see also Mendelowitz and Govender 2024). We write and share poetry, and other critical-creative-affective texts, that allow us to position ourselves in more empowering ways as well as reimagine English education. We use these vignettes as a starting point and as immediate inspiration to conceptualise an anti-racist manifesto for language work in English education.

An anti-racist manifesto for the here and now

Our manifesto builds on the long histories of anti-racist efforts in the UK and is located within a global movement which is pushing back against institutional racism in schools and broader society (Shafi and Nagdee 2021; Sobande and Hill 2022). Here we seek to contribute to these efforts, in dialogue with a critical tradition in English education which has long fractured and denaturalised commonly held assumptions about the language and literacy practices of racially marginalised children. The work we present in this article is motivated by our concerns around state-crafted narratives and policies in the UK which

reproduce deficit-based ideologies about what marginalised children supposedly cannot do with their language (Cushing 2022). These ideologies are in parallel to how European colonisers justified their project of dehumanisation and linguistic annihilation (Rosa and Flores 2017). We are also troubled by an increasingly bustling market of popular textbooks for English teachers, none of which we feel adequately deals with anti-racism – and in most cases, completely overlooks it. We are also interested in how beginning teachers and teacher education might become critical sites for radically reimagining and reinventing language and literacy education.

We are academics whose work spans critical applied linguistics, teacher education, and the sociology of education, and whose work is carried out from Great Britain, a colonial power which produced the world's most powerful form of linguistic imperialism. We are both tenured academics and recognise our privileged positions in this regard. Ian is a white male brought up in a working-class community of northern England, who now works as an educational linguist in a university but had a previous career as a teacher where they witnessed first-hand the harm that oppressive ideologies about language have on a school community. They continue to see this in academic knowledge production and the resurgence of deficit thinking about language in schools. Navan is a third/fourth-generation Indian South African living and working in Glasgow. Their interest in critical literacies sprung from personal and professional experiences with power: growing up (gender)queer in a cisheteronormative society, being a person of colour in a predominantly white educational system, and learning to play the colonial game through language, accent, and academia whilst seeking to subvert the inequitable status quo. Their work seeks to sustain and build upon the critical literacies that expose power and ideology as well as enable social change and creativity.

Our work builds on a wave of recent scholarship which is challenging how racialised children are positioned, perceived, and categorised in schools as displaying linguistic shortcomings which require various kinds of language-based interventions to rectify them (e.g. Baker-Bell 2020; Smith 2022; Winn, Martinez, and Caraballo 2018). It builds on a long history of teacher education designed to support critical approaches to English language and literacy education. We seek to disrupt assumptions about what constitutes il/legitimate language practices in schools, by calling attention to the socially and colonially constructed nature of linguistic dichotomies such as standard/non-standard, academic/non-academic, literate/illiterate, and so on.

Long histories of anti-racist efforts in English language education

There is a long history of anti-racist activism in English language education across the four nations of the UK. In this section we briefly outline some of these efforts to further contextualise the anti-racist English education manifesto that we offer, and situate our work as building on these efforts.

In England, anti-racist and anti-colonial work in English education rose to initial prominence in the late 1950s amidst a spate of anti-Black and anti-immigrant education policies which not just denied racialised children the right to use their own language practices in schools, but actively punished them for doing so. Community organising bringing together academics, teachers, parents, and children has always been at the core of these anti-racist efforts. For instance, the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA)

worked with Black activist-linguists such as Ansel Wong, Marina Foster, and Roxy Harris to develop classroom materials which both exposed the discriminatory ideologies found within state policies and sought to affirm the language practices of racialised and bilingual children. In the 1970s, Bernard Coard's expose of the racist structures of so-called Schools for the Educationally Subnormal centred issues of language discrimination, where he showed how Black children were being categorised as cognitively inferior due to perceptions that they lacked adequate language (Coard 1971). Recent scholarship reminds us how Coard's expose still rings true today (Wallace and Salisbury 2022). The work of Chris Searle in the 1970s provides a model of how community alliances can expand anti-racist work beyond individual classrooms and towards institutional structures. Searle, who was famously sacked from his East London school for publishing an anthology of student poems despite being instructed not to do so by the school governors, drew national support and raised the profile of anti-racist struggles and possibilities that English teachers have available to them. Searle (1983) paid close attention to the colonial histories and legacies of categories such as "standard English" and "academic language", and how the policing of deviations from these in schools was underpinned by white supremacy. These efforts were often in stark contrast to sociolinguists who claimed to be in affiliation with marginalised communities but often paid scant attention to the broader structures of racial inequality which shaped the specific articulations of language ideologies in schools (e.g. Halliday 1978). Despite their claims to social justice, these efforts simply suggested that racially marginalised, working-class children could be best supported by using their nonstandardised language as a bridge to acquiring standardised and "elaborated" codes and these tweaks to their language would offer them a route to equality.

Scotland's approach to anti-racism, however, has sought to look at policy, culture, and education more broadly. In January 2023, the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER) released the report *Do Black Lives Still Matter in Scotland?* wherein they outline the progress, or lack thereof, made by various organisations in Scotland since the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests in 2020. Their report outlines how organisations' commitments to anti-racist work have engaged in actionable institutional change (including Scottish universities, and public and third sector organisations), as well as where these continue to fall short. While the CRER (2023) report does help to demonstrate that change towards institutional equity and anti-racism is taking place (albeit at a sometimes painfully slow pace), it should also be understood as a repetition of a promise that never materialises.

A history of unfulfilled promise becomes further evidenced by Scotland's long history of anti-racist activism and scholarship. Sobande and hill (2022) *Black Oot Here: Black Lives in Scotland* traces this history in depth by connecting pre-twentieth century Black activism with contemporary experiences and voices of Black people connected to Scotland. This paints a detailed picture of the significant intellectual, civic, artistic, and leadership contributions by Black people and communities in and for Scotland, as well as the tensions between different approaches to anti-racism and decolonialisation that emerges (see Jackson 2020; Meer, Akhtar, and Davidson 2020).

What is notable for our paper here is the lack of anti-racist work specific to English education being reported through research. Despite this, there are perhaps opportunities for research specifically focused on anti-racist English language and literacy education that may enable policy revisions. That is, while Scotland's *Curriculum for Excellence* has

been commended by the it has also been critiqued for its inconsistent conceptualisation and use of the term "critical literacy" (Farrar and Stone 2019). It also places a high value on the aesthetic appreciation of literature that is then reinforced by the Scottish Qualifications Association's (SQA) national examinations, which sits at odds with the political and socially conscious underpinnings of critical literacies. These tensions within Scotland's national curriculum, educational policy, and assessment structures, and the weight afforded to them, reinforce the study of English as mostly uncritical unless individual teachers, departments, and/or local authorities take it upon themselves to do things differently. Teacher education has been one means of supporting the use of critical literacies for intersectional anti-racist and decolonial action (Govender 2023), particularly if supported by the recent National Anti-Racism Framework for Initial Teacher Education (SCDE 2023).

Meanwhile, Northern Ireland at large has seen increases in cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity alongside increased discourses related to inclusion and anti-racism. Geoghegan (2008, 174) has argued that this has brought to the fore an "awkwardness" in negotiating racialised difference. Such awkwardness, they argue, comes when anti-racist movements, knowledge, and practice from elsewhere in the UK and the world (particularly the United States) gets transposed onto the historical, cultural, and colonial histories of sectarianism in Northern Ireland. Geoghegan argues that there is an existing logic and sociocultural structure based on "two communities", Protestants and Catholics, and that efforts at anti-racism and multiculturalism are shaped by these forces:

> The pervasiveness of sectarianism is revealed in the complex processes of identification and incorporation by which anti-racist discourses and practices position migrants and minority ethnic communities in relation to dominant sectarian narratives. (Geoghegan 2008, 189)

While this is not to say that anti-racism in Northern Ireland has not gained traction through community or government support, rather that the shape of anti-racism will necessarily be different as it becomes formulated, applied, co-opted, and negotiated in relation to existing cultural, religious, and ethnic structures of power. This is further compounded when considering the effects of British colonialism's racialisation of Irish people and the role of the English language in suppressing indigenous languages and denying access to literacy (see Ignatiev 1995; Mackenzie, Engman, and McGurk 2022).

It is against this complex social, cultural, and political backdrop that integrated calls for inclusive policy and practice might be understood. For example, the *Shared Future: First Triennial Action Plan 2006–2009* (Office of the First Minister & Deputy first Minister 2006) locates the "Racial Equality Strategy" (p. 10) as part of the core more to "eliminate sectarianism, racism and all forms of prejudice to enable people to live and work without fear or intimidation" (p. 8). It also constructs increasing diversity and anti-racism as having "a genuinely leavening effect on a society that has long been frozen in a 'two traditions' divide" (p. 10). More recently, the 2023 Race Law Reform targets racial discrimination as based on colour and nationality (Equality Commission for Northern Ireland 2022, 2023), marking the possible need to distinguish further the complexities of interconnected differences of race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, religion, language, and so on.

This resonates with the racial politics of Scotland as it also seeks to address sectarianism, racism, xenophobia, and linguistic imperialism. Another similarity perhaps also lies in how anti-racist efforts in Scotland and Northern Ireland attend to broader social, political,

cultural, and educational issues and institutions, taking for granted the role of language and literacy for understanding, maintaining, and transforming problematic relations of power and shifting ideologies – as they relate to race and ethnicity. Across both contexts, however, ongoing work in critical literacies might provide opportunities for doing more strategic, culturally sustainable anti-racist English language and literacy work in early y, primary, secondary, further and higher/teacher education (Farrar and Stone 2019; Govender 2023)

Anti-racist English language education efforts in Wales currently take place amidst a 2022 Welsh Government strategy to create an anti-racist nation (Welsh Government 2022). In stark contrast to England's 2021 Sewell Report, this strategy explicitly names institutional and structural racism, placing responsibility on white people to address the inherent racism within the systems they live and work in. Schools feature heavily here, with the mandatory inclusion of enslavement and colonialism in the school curriculum a recent move, as well as compulsory training in race for pre- and in-service teachers and efforts to attract more racially diverse teachers into schools (see Davis et al. 2023). Whilst there are new anti-racist efforts in Wales then, these should be read against a history of English colonialism in Wales in which the oppression of language played a central role. The Welsh Not, a wooden object used in Welsh schools in the late 19th Century (mostly, but not exclusively, before the Elementary Education Act of 1870) which was hung around the necks of children heard to be speaking Welsh instead of English. The child who wore the object at the end of the day was punished in various ways, including physical beatings. Although the use of it as a widespread form of punishment is questioned, it nonetheless represents a very real form of public language shaming and represents similar hostile, disciplinary techniques used in colonial European colonies throughout the world (see Heller and McElhinny 2017). Current efforts in Welsh language revitalisation in schools are intimately bound up with anti-colonial and anti-racist struggles more broadly, especially when drawing on the transformative potential of translanguaging – a liberatory concept which was first theorised in relation to Welsh schools (Lewis, Jones, and Baker 2012; see also Li Wei and García 2022).

An anti-racist English education

What might an anti-racist English language and literacy education look, sound, and feel like? What are its underpinning principles and practices? In the remainder of this article we seek to develop a manifesto that speaks as an act of defiance against persistent arguments of "No Problem Here" (Davidson et al. 2018) which deny the presence of structural racism in the UK (see Tikly 2022). Our framework for an anti-racist English language education begins with four premises of power:

There is a long and varied research base for establishing each of these taken-for-granted premises, and we do not consider these to be contested or controversial. Instead, we point here to these premises as simply a starting point for anti-racist efforts in English education, encouraging our readers to reflect and act on their own positions of power/marginalisation, their own colonial relationships with language, and the specific sociopolitical contexts they work in.

Table 1 provides a conceptual backdrop for further understanding Lamar Johnson's (2021) five dimensions of anti-Black violence and its implications for English education in

Table 1. Premises of power in English education.

Premise	Elaboration
English is a colonial *language* of power	We understand English as a medium for linguistic imperialism and the maintenance of Anglonormativity, shaped by its colonial histories and its ongoing logics of coloniality.
Standardised and academic English are *linguistic varieties* of power	We conceptualise standardised and academic English as social and colonial constructions which were designed on the language practices of those occupying privileged racial and economic positions.
Language is a communicative *mode* of power	We understand that language is a mode of power to contain and control, and that there is a hierarchy of modes: with written and spoken language typically taking precedent over signed and multimodal language practices.
Whiteness, coloniality, masculinity, cis-heteronormativity, able-bodied-ness, neurotypicality, monolingualism, monoculturalism, middle-class-ness, and native speakerism are entangled *ideologies* of power operationalised through language.	We emphasise the ideological nature of language and how these ideologies emerge out of specific sociohistorical, gendered, racial, economic, and political contexts.

the UK. These dimensions were initially explored in relation to a *pedagogy of love* (L. L. Johnson, Bryan, and Boutte 2019, 48), defined as "the type of deep-seated love that is cloaked in pain and that is bounded in action which disrupts the social constructions of anti-Blackness and white supremacist patriarchy through the practice of humanizing love". Pedagogies of love are constrained when schools remain sites of intersectional violence, white supremacy, and oppression (see also Annamma 2017; Love 2023; Sriprakash, Rudolph, and Gerrard 2022). As part of developing our own understanding of an anti-racist English education in the UK, we draw on Johnson's work to recognise various forms of racial violence, engage both radically and productively with these conditions of violence, as well as make a more substantial and visible space for joy, creation, and imagination as modes of affirmation. Therefore, in Table 2, for every dimension of racial violence we offer a means to conceptualise the corresponding dimensions of racial affirmation.

Importantly, racial violence and affirmation are intertwined, making for pedagogical practice that is often considered uncomfortable or risky (Boler 1999; Zembylas 2015). Anti-racist education, broadly speaking, is therefore laden with affective shifts, both positive and negative, that teachers, teacher educators, and students must lean into and negotiate. Using the principles presented in this section, we now turn our attention to the possibilities for anti-racist pedagogic action in English language and literacy education.

Dimensions of an anti-racist English education

It has been a privilege to engage with the histories of anti-racist work and activism across the UK. Our overview of only some of this ongoing work exposes both the resilience of anti-racist activism as well as possible gaps in scholarship. That is, what might an anti-racist English language and literacy education look like in the UK, conceptually and pragmatically?

Drawing together the histories of anti-racism in the UK, the four premises of power in English education, and the dimensions of racial violence and affirmation, we suggest that

Table 2. Dimensions of racial violence and racial affirmation.

Dimensions of Racial Violence	Description	Dimensions of Racial Affirmation	Description
Physical violence	Physical abuse and assault that stems from racial discrimination and prejudicial ideologies	Physical affirmation	Affirming the critical and creative nature of racial-ethnic joy and pleasure as embodied and psychosocial practices of healing from trauma in safe, brave, and allied spaces
Symbolic violence	A metaphorical representation and realisation of violence	Symbolic affirmation	Engaging in (re)design and counter-storying as a means to resist erasure and/or misrepresentation, to assert the diversity of racialised experiences and meaning-making into a space, and to see racial/ethnic difference embedded into the curriculum
Linguistic violence	Marginalising, policing, and annihilating the language of racialised children and teachers	Linguistic affirmation	Recognising, affirming, celebrating, and critically engaging with a range of (English) language varieties and meaning-making practices as valuable assets for critical-creative language and literacy education
Curricular and pedagogic violence	Curricula, teaching texts, classroom materials, and standards that center white and Eurocentric notions of existing and being in the world	Curricular and pedagogic affirmation	Curricula, teaching texts, classroom materials, and standards that engage in pluriversality and intersectionality by centring a broad range of racialised, ethnic, cultural, literary, linguistic, and meaning-making traditions, practices, and positions
Systemic school violence	Policies, processes, structures, customs, and laws which reflect and reproduce racist and hegemonic ideologies	Systemic school affirmation	Collaborative, community-based policies, processes, structures, customs, and laws that create the conditions for valuing and fully understanding difference, cultural sustainability and hybridity, as well as civic participation

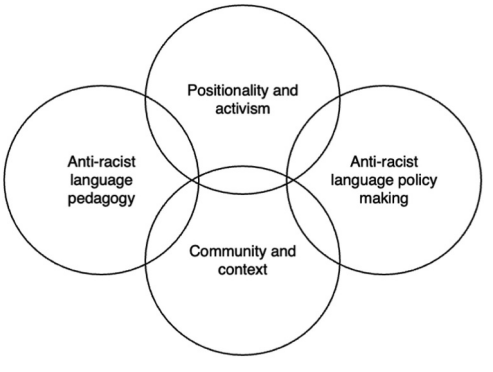

Figure 1. Dimensions of an anti-racist English education.

there are four core areas to anti-racist English education. These are arranged non-hierarchically in Figure 1, as: (1) positionality and activism; (2) anti-racist language policy making; (3) community and context, and (4) anti-racist language pedagogies.

These are entangled and interdependent; each requiring commitment, conceptualisation, and enactment to provide the conditions for culturally sustainable, critically literate,

and transformative practice in English language and literacy education. Below, we outline each of these core areas in more detail, and with the hope that it will serve to inform more strategic change across individuals, classrooms and departments, school structures and local authorities, as well as community and policy-level work. That is, may it bring into clearer view how language and literacy education might play in the larger movement towards anti-racist and socially just futures.

Positionality and activism

In this section we foreground the importance of teacher positionality in becoming an anti-racist educator. This is influenced by a long history of scholarship which has stressed how teachers see and position themselves comes to shape the kinds of choices they make in the classroom.

Fundamental to this lies in making a clear positionality statement where English teachers must address their role in relation to marginalisation and privilege. This goes beyond simply "making a statement" (Boveda and Annamma 2023) and is not simply a rhetorical move nor a listing of static identities, but a careful consideration of the dynamic, multidimensional, and interlocking nature of power and oppression. These acts of positioning open up possibilities for reflective pedagogies who understand the roles that race, class, gender, language, and dis/ability play out in classrooms. Given our focus on language and race in this article, we suggest that a raciolinguistic perspective offers a powerful way in which teachers can begin to formulate an anti-racist positioning in which linguistic in/justice plays a central role (Rosa and Flores 2017). A raciolinguistic perspective shifts attention away from stigmatised communities and their purported linguistic deficiencies, and towards colonial logics and modes of perception which produce linguistic hierarchies. Put another way, a raciolinguistic perspective places responsibility on listeners to modify their ways of *perceiving* language as opposed to marginalised communities to modify their ways of *using* language. We argue that this positioning and perspective is particularly important for English educators racialised as white, given the long history of English education being associated with whiteness and white supremacy (see Tanner 2019). In taking a raciolinguistic perspective, teachers can move towards identifying how colonial logics about language and personhood underpin their classroom, and seek to disrupt them.

In dialogue with this, we argue that English teachers committed to anti-racism should see themselves as language activists, who engage in energetic and critical action which seeks to disrupt, challenge, and influence dominant language ideologies and policies which are underpinned by white supremacy. Teachers who identify as activists reject modest, reformist approaches to justice and insist that change can only be brought about through the dismantling and rebuilding of entire systems (Picower 2012). Here we are particularly concerned with teachers and teacher educators who espouse social justice narratives but whose solutions for social change are focused on language-based solutions which teach racialised students to use academic or standard language practices in appropriate situations. These reformist and additive logics simply place the burden on racialised communities to modify their linguistic behaviours in ways which over-determines their language as inherently deficient and overlooks the broader, structural realities of injustice which shape their everyday experiences of school. Whilst some may

see this call for structural change as pragmatically unrealistic, we argue that it is only through such large-scale abolition and redesign that linguistic justice can be achieved, and that the redesigns of those systems must be achieved not through simply marginalised people having a seat at the table, but by reimagining the table completely (Love 2023). These processes of radical change and healing get to the very core of how race and racialisation have shaped English education, and how colonial logics about language and literacy were foundational to its disciplinary origins (Badenhorst, Tanner, and Grinage 2023; Hodgson and Harris 2012). It is no surprise to us then, that during the preparation of this article, the UK Department for Education were attempting to "root out" activist teachers who were critical of the government (Zahawi 2022), and calling for the criminalisation of critical race theory as applied to schools (Badenoch 2020). We have also observed English teachers on social media suggesting that it is not the place of teachers to incorporate discussions of settler colonialism in Palestine. We reject that any version of English education can be politically impartial and instead call upon all English teachers to explicitly bring attention to the politicised, classed, and racialised nature of the classrooms and schools they work in. To not do so is a manifestation of white ignorance – a structural characteristic of Western schools in which the interests of whiteness are preserved by actively ignoring, overlooking, or downplaying the realities of racial domination and colonial histories (Mills 1997).

Anti-racist language and literacy policy making

In this section we argue that language policies and the enactment thereof have a role to play in an anti-racist English education, as way of directly naming and rejecting standard language, raciolinguistic, and monolingual ideologies. Whilst we see this type of policy activity as important, we want to be clear that anti-racist language policies should be seen as part of broader anti-racist and anti-colonial efforts, and that policies by themselves do not represent sufficient action. Our call for English teachers to pay critical attention to language policies stems directly from our work which has exposed how oppressive ideologies about language are normalised in school policies in England (Cushing 2021). Across hundreds of school literacy policies, this analysis exposed how dichotomous framings of language such as 'correct/incorrect, "word rich/word poor", "academic/non-academic", "formal/informal" and "standard/non-standard", functioned to bolster ideologies about language which legitimise language policing. Such policies position teachers as benevolent standard language role models whose job is to listen out for language practices perceived as deviant and nonconformist, in the (mis)belief that the modification of language acts as a tool for enabling racial justice.

An anti-racist language policy rejects such logics and instead assumes a critical, language ideological perspective which exposes how normative framings of language are anchored to colonial and capitalist logics (Heller & McElhinny 2017). Put this way, a language policy is simply part of a school's efforts to address social inequalities produced by racial and economic disparities. These efforts might, for example, draw critical attention to how discourses around the so-called language gap overlook the broader patterns of injustice which marginalised children experience (D. Johnson and Johnson 2021). This includes rejecting initiatives which are rooted in, and reproduce, deficit discourses about the language and cultural practices of marginalised children and

frame school as a space where they can be compensated for these perceived defects (e.g. as found in popular teacher textbooks, such as Quigley 2018; Willingham 2009). Instead, an anti-racist language policy seeks to connect issues of linguistic injustice and privilege with wider realities of injustice and privilege. Whilst we are not suggesting that schools can and should be responsible for the injustices created by racial capitalism, we are suggesting that school language policies can function as one important artefact in directly acknowledging and addressing the racial and class hierarchies of which language ideologies are so central to maintaining. We continue to be inspired by teachers we collaborate with who have endeavoured to do this kind of work. For example, we have worked with an English department in a low-income neighbourhood of northern England, who designed a new language policy as part of their school's wider anti-racist and anti-capitalist efforts. This language policy was contextualised in light of the UK Government's austerity agenda which continued to produce devastating consequences for the school community. This policy actively rejected how the government posed language-based solutions for structural inequalities and instead focused on how school can be a space where students from racialised and working-class communities have their language practices sustained, and how developing a critical awareness about language ideology can help students to show how perceptions of their language are proxies for race and class-based stigma.

We also stress that there are connections between language and other forms of racism and stigma. When the language of a racialised child's language is devalued in school, it simply reflects how their lives are devalued in the world – just as how a white child's language is privileged is reflective of their privilege more broadly (see also Baker-Bell 2020). Linguistic racism intersects with the hostile policing of Black hair (Joseph-Salisbury and Connelly 2018), with school uniforms (Rogers 2022), with the policing of children's bodies (Morris 2016), with disciplinary and exclusion policies (Kulz 2017), and with curricula underpinned by whiteness (Sriprakash, Rudolph, and Gerrard 2022). An anti-racist language policy makes connections across these and refuses to see language as an isolated mode of stigma and privilege.

Community and context

> Minoritized languages will always be devalued in school so long as the speakers of these languages are devalued members of society. (Flores and Chaparro 2018, 381)

While this quote from Flores and Chaparro is part of a larger discussion about anti-racist language policies in Philadelphia, it holds true for marginalised varieties of English and undervalued or oppressed social positions such as race/ethnicity. That is, the connection between educational institutions (including schools) and society is a strong one. Any movement towards anti-racist practice within a school can only be enhanced if it is supported by shifts in the wider community, and vice-versa.

Therefore, to do anti-racist English education requires forging alliances with activist and other community groups beyond the classroom, school, college, or university boundaries. Drawing on findings from Franis' (2023) work on Queer Activism in South African Education, it becomes possible to "view alliances between formal educational structures and activist or community-based civil organizations for their

educational and pedagogical utility" (Govender 2024). And, from our brief overview of anti-racist histories, it is easy to see that there are many active groups, organisations, and people across the UK working towards racial justice and decolonial futures. Perhaps revisiting these groups from raciolinguistic and critical anti-racist literacies perspectives might further reveal their critically literate practices of text consumption, deconstruction, redesign, and production, over and above the knowledge and experience they would offer. For example, Cushing (2023b) describes how Mowahib, a Black teacher working in north London, adopted an activist stance in her school community to push back against what she perceived to be anti-Black literacy policies. Mowahib and Ian had spent time together in the Black Cultural Archives in Brixton where we explored some of the long histories of anti-Black linguistic racism in England's schools. In particular, her engagement with Marina Foster and Bernard Coard's work on linguistic racism in the 1960s and 1970s allowed her to see how underlying colonial logics continued to shape her senior management's decisions about language in her school. In our fieldwork, we have collected many other examples of how teachers connect local and global issues of language-based oppression together.

Pahl and Rasool (2020) provide an example of activist literacies as they intersect with anti-racism. They explain how "community activism is a powerful tool for people made invisible by changes in our physical, social, and political landscapes to reclaim their own histories and achieve justice" (Pahl and Rasool 2020). Bringing the literate practices of community activism into classroom spaces therefore involves providing access to authentic texts about power within the community, allowing contact between young people and activists working towards intersectional anti-racism, and providing the conditions for young people to write or produce a range of texts for those organisations and communities. Pahl and Rasool's work includes examples of young women and scholar-activists writing poetry, recording conversations at school gates, and taking photographs as empowering meaning-making practices that attend to lived realities of racialised, gendered, and sexualised power.

This resonates with Sobande and hill's (2022, 183) claim that "the lives of Black people in Scotland [and elsewhere in the UK] can never wholly be understood or (re)told whilst substantial and sustained avenues for Black self-expression fail to exist". English language and literacy classrooms, when partnered with community-based actions, are one such avenue for children and young people – not only to see themselves in education and civic action, but also to assert themselves into educational and community spaces through language and literacy.

Anti-racist pedagogies for English education

We insist that issues of language in/equality cannot be separated from broader issues of in/equality which shape society, and that anti-racist efforts begin by taking an actively politicised stance to the classroom. In Govender's (2023) previous work with secondary English Education student teachers in Scotland, they proposed political-pedagogical action as that which

> involves recognising that all teacherly decisions (from classroom practice to curriculum design) are inherently bound to issues of power. From this position, teachers might make

> pedagogical choices in more socially just ways that empower themselves and students to deconstruct and reconstruct teaching and learning in more equitable ways. (Govender 2023, 236)

This insists that teaching language and literacy is critical-creative-affective work (Mendelowitz and Govender 2024), entangled with the broader sociocultural, political, historical, and ideological workings of race and racism, gender, sexuality, and cisheterosexism, bodies and neurotypical ableism. Political-pedagogical action also sees teachers and learners, schools and classrooms, homes and communities, as radical agents and sites for identifying, deconstructing, exploring, and transforming those relations of power towards intersectional anti-racist justice. Each of the following interdependent pedagogical moves that we present here therefore represents some of the key actions that teachers, learners, and teacher educators might make in reconstituting English language and literacy education as intersectionally anti-racist. This includes 1) critical text selection, 2) critical anti-racist inquiry, and 3) critical text production.

In the first instance, teachers, teacher educators, local authorities, national assessment or qualifications boards, and governments must recognise their role as gatekeepers of knowledge, representation, and linguistic repertoire (or, indeed policing) in education. Access then presents itself as a political-pedagogical social issue. Janks (2013, 226) explains in her interdependent model of power, access, diversity, and (re)design that "access without a theory of power leads to the naturalisation of powerful discourses without an understanding of how these powerful forms came to be powerful", that access without diversity "fails to recognise that difference fundamentally affects who gets access to what and who can benefit from this access", and that access without (re)design "maintains and reifies dominant forms without considering how they can be [or have been] transformed" (parenthesis added). Critical text selection is therefore a practice of understanding how access to texts across representations of violence and affirmation, and through a critical race lens, contributes to producing, maintaining, disrupting, or transforming powerful and persistent raciolinguistic ideologies.

Our framework provides a means to interrogate the texts that teachers and learners currently have access to and how these texts are valued through selection and use – that is, how linguistic violence and affirmation surface in education. Text selection thus becomes further implicated in raciolinguistic power structures and practices as they relate to how texts are used, or not, for a variety of purposes. For example, what texts make it into a formal curriculum compared to those texts that are reserved for reading for pleasure? What texts are deemed unsuitable by the state because they are framed as too political? What texts do teachers and learners recommend to each other, and what is the nature of "text talk" about, with, or through these texts? Furthermore, if or when teachers and learners evaluate the kinds of texts (characters, plots, authors, genres, and modes) that are currently accessible in their educational contexts, does this lead into critical inquiries about those gaps in representation and any kind of social or institutional change?

Past and current critical research into children's and young adult literature reveals possibilities for developing critical inquiries into text selection in primary and secondary schooling contexts in various combinations of collaboration: teachers with learners, teachers with teacher educators, student teachers with teachers, etc. Cushing (2022), for

instance, worked with secondary English teachers in England to explore how Kelly Yang's *Front Desk* can be used to work with young people to expose and interrogate experiences of raciolinguistic prejudice across race, ethnicity, and nationality/citizenship status. The young people in this study are honest and clear about their experiences, demonstrating their keen capacities for critical engagement with literature and anti-racism. Similarly, Neville (2020) explores the role of literature in anti-racist English education with pre-service teachers, while Baker-Bell (2020) offers *Anti-Racist Black Language Pedagogy* to conceptualise racialised cultural and linguistic power in the English Language Arts classroom. Govender (2023) also explores how student teachers of secondary English navigate multiple texts, across genres and modes, to engage in decolonial praxis.

Critical text production is therefore a means to mobilise learning from reading/viewing into a practice of (re)design with a heightened awareness of the social functions and effects of texts. Creating counter-stories, for instance, is a means to write back to existing power relations that emerge in (non-)fiction texts. Equally important, however, is also the production of "new" texts that draw on the cultural, linguistic, out-of-school knowledge and experiences of learners. That is, there is affirmative power in being valued for writing from one's own social positions. For an anti-racist English education, access to texts by and for diverse BPoC experiences and perspectives contributes to creating the conditions for children and young people to write and design a variety of texts that explicitly draw on their own experiences and understandings of the world, as well as to address experiences of racial violence or mobilise and foreground experiences of racial-ethnic or cultural joy.

Towards anti-racist futures in English education

This article has offered a manifesto for an anti-racist English education, in which we have pushed for transformative justice in ways which refuse to locate individual racialised children as sites of remediation, and instead look to uproot the underpinning forces of marginalisation. This includes making space within English language and literacy education to acknowledge and attend to both violence and affirmation – trauma and joy. In line with this, we want to express caution and clarification that we are not suggesting English education alone provides the single solution for addressing racial injustices. But an anti-racist stance is certainly a starting point, in adopting a position which refuses to separate out language from broader dimensions of oppression and privilege. We also want to express caution that what we have presented here is not a checklist, but a roadmap. These are simply ideas which require continuous reflection-action (Freire 1970). That is, we seek to bring together the histories and actions in intersectional anti-racism so that they might serve teachers and young people in building critical dispositions through language and literacy education. We caution against our work being used as some kind of reductive box-ticking exercise or audit that teacher educators and school-based mentors might use as a tool to demonstrate fidelity to anti-racism. We have similar concerns about Ofsted doing this in its inspection methodologies. Such an approach would be deeply flawed, and we reject any crude tools which attempt to reduce our manifesto to an assessment or inspection procedure.

We hope that our manifesto is used by teachers, students, and teacher educators within English education to begin and develop explorations of anti-racist efforts within their particular contexts. Whilst we are reluctant to suggest specific

ways in which this might happen, we would like to see this work as being used as a discussion point in reading groups, seminars, and informal conversations between colleagues and peers. We would want to see readers reflecting on their own intersectional privileges, marginalisation, and positions within society. We would want to see readers seeing issues of language and race as intimately connected to aspects of class, dis/ability, gender and sexuality. We would want our readers to be sceptical of the messages about language contained within state policy, especially those which rely on reductive theories of language which locate deficiencies within marginalised children. We would want our readers to question the underlying research about language which informs such policies. Ultimately, we would want to our readers to see anti-racist efforts as a long-term project, but one that is urgently needed in our field. We are eager to see if the field of English education is ready to do so.

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