

## **Conversations on the Inconvenient Racism of a “Foreign” Language Education FIG Report**

Our winter-spring FIG centered around questions how language teaching intersects with language power, colonialism, and the personal position and identity of language teachers and students within language communities. We read one book, “Spanish so White: Conversations on the Inconvenient Racism of a “Foreign” Language Education,” by Adam Schwartz (2023). In each meeting, we discussed two chapters of the book, and then in our last meeting we talked with the author about ways to implement insights from the book in our pedagogy.

Here is a brief overview of our meetings:

1. We shared reasons for participation in the FIG, our own language learning/teaching stories and position in relation to the language we teach, and discussed the preface of the book. We made a plan for the reading and future meetings. We brought up a topic that was discussed every week: the varied identities of our students in relation to the languages we teach, and the challenge of meeting the needs of student from all backgrounds.
2. Discussion of chapters 1-2. We touched on questions related to the use and pronunciation of names and nicknames in language classes, guiding principles or community agreements in our classes, finding space/time in the curriculum for discussions of raciolinguistics, colonialism, etc, and accessibility of these topics to students in the target language vs using another language.
3. Discussion of chapters 3-4. We touched on questions related to the various flavors of bilingualism, linguistic identity and the sense of belonging in the classroom (for both students and instructors), and creating a language classroom that is "humanizing for all who seek to teach and learn within it."
4. Discussion of chapters 5-6. We talked about how class time spent on language ideologies may be in tension with time spent practicing use of the target language, but Schwartz says this is a social responsibility, and FIG members say that in the age of machine translation this is one of the purposes of language classes. We also talked about building an ethic of care in our classrooms, and made plans for our meeting with the author.
5. We sat with the author in a café and each described our positionalities relative to the languages we teach, then discussed some of our ideas and challenges in implementing the ideas from the book.

Our FIG included teachers of Spanish, ESL, and Chinuk Wawa. We all felt that the FIG was beneficial in allowing us to connect with colleagues across campus who teach in similar

disciplines and who teach similar students. We learned about some of the specific ways language ideologies play out in each of our languages, finding both similarities and differences among the group. We found it useful to reflect on our own positions as language learners and teachers, and the ways we use our power in language classes, as well as learning about structural issues affecting each of our programs at LCC. We shared ideas and practices for building supportive communities in our language classes, as well as next steps for having necessary conversations about language ideologies in our classes, and for avoiding potential harm in those conversations. These practical ideas will benefit our instruction directly.

We have all shared about what we learned informally with our nearest colleagues, and with other language teachers in our social circles. One FIG member is planning an international talk for this fall and will include some insights from the FIG. We come from two different divisions at LCC, and are considering ways to share briefly during fall in-service.