

**“For Better or For Worse, Standard Academic English”: Code Meshing and Multimodality
in Academia**

Jalees Axia Tamayo

Department of English–Writing Studies, Nevada State University

Honors Thesis

Brianne Taormina-Barrientos

3 May, 2024

10/26/23

I don't know how to go about this, I know and I know that I shouldn't be thinking this way. I don't feel like myself anymore. I feel hesitant to take sessions because maybe I shouldn't be taking sessions. Am I still a writer? Am I qualified to take sessions? Maybe I just lied my way through the writing center and pretended like I was good about what I do? Maybe I can't help students and they need better writers like the rest of my coworkers. They're good at what they do and I am not. Am I being dramatic? The feedback wasn't that bad was it?

I just feel scared to write. To write my assignment for Rachel or even Bri. What if they see right past me too? Realize that she's right about my writing. I have sentence fragments, I don't read enough, and I have grammar mistakes. Do I belong in my writing center? Will they see that I am a bad writer too? I sat on my break in silence in a room and just thought about my writing. I felt an attack on my language. I am a multilingual writer and my mom taught me my language. It's where I learned how to speak, the slang she uses, and how to talk. My words as a kid were jumbled and incoherent. No one understood me but my mom. That's why I liked writing because no one needed to go the extra mile and ask me to repeat my sentences. They understood me on one try and that was it. They understood me on paper.

It feels like an attack on my moms language now. Sentence fragments are common with multilingual students and I write how it makes sense to do it. I feel like there's nothing left for me. Maybe I should stop writing. But it's the way I process, it's the way I feel, and it's the way I am understood. She might not think I am a bad writer, but now I do. I didn't think I was the best before but now I think I am. What's the point in writing? Should I leave it behind? Again am I just dramatic? I'm scared that my professors will think I shouldn't have been teaching the

Nepantla students. Thinking I made them worse. Did I reflect poorly on Rachel and her writing center? No one is perfect. I know that and I know better but my mind feels so plagued. I've been working so hard and I know that I have to work twice as hard than others. Nothing comes easy to me, like the last time I admitted to someone that I had trouble with a class and I had to put so much work into it. He looked at me and said really? That's easy. I had no problem with it. I'm surprised you don't think it's easy either. No one understands what's easy for them, that I work twice as hard for it. Their half ass work that gets an A regardless is just my hard work that will border the C+.

“Stay out of the sun!! You wrinkle easily because you’re white!”

Chapter 1: A positionality introduction

To start off this honors thesis, I want to begin it by acknowledging my privilege and who I am. My honors thesis is focusing on my experiences as a woman of color in academia, the challenges, hardships, and accomplishments I had experienced. Gloria Anazdula is who I often look upon and originally what I felt inspired me through this journey. I wanted to end my undergraduate with a project that I felt proud of and Gloria inspired me to include it. Anzaldúa (1987) writes “Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself.” (p. 81)

While I am a first generation Mexican Woman, it’s only fair that I acknowledge my privileges before I start this. Growing up, my mother would always tell me to stay out of the sun, that I’ll wrinkle easily because of how white I am. I was always scolded for being in the sun though I loved the sun and when you live in a desert your whole life you can end up yearning for it. My mothers intentions were never to remind me of my privilege, though she would always tell me she was allowed in the sun because she was brown and I wasn’t, and it told me growing up that we weren’t the same. In the comments I heard growing up that others made fun of her skin color in passing about how her skin wasn’t white but how beautiful was I that she was able to give birth to a munekita? My mother claimed she prayed for me to come out with blue or green eyes. To be white as snow with dark black hair and that God answered her prayers except one. It

wasn't until years later that I had her unpack this, and she admitted that she didn't want me to go through what she did, constantly being called beautiful but her dark skin was the only thing that made her look bad. If only she was lighter she had heard it all from the Señoras, boys at school, and even her own tias and tios. She didn't want her little girl to go through the same thing because she can admit these words had tore down her confidence.

Recently, she stared at me lovingly and said I wish I had your skin color. My stomach always dropped at those comments. She's the most beautiful woman in the world. I can only hope to be half as beautiful as her, but that wasn't what she thought. The insecurity of being not pretty enough because she wasn't white enough lived on. I have countless stories of the racism my mother has faced and internalized throughout her life and in academia as she is still currently working towards her undergraduate degree.

She had reminded me of my privilege without realizing it and for that I thank her for allowing me to see that the world isn't black and white and that I carry privileges that I wouldn't have if I wasn't white. So, in saying that I want to say I am a white skinned Mexican who holds privileges, people are more likely to receive information better if it is coming from my mouth, I am given more opportunities and though I am speaking on my experience in academia, it is crucial to know that this experience is not the same for every Mexican woman in academia.

Alder-Kassner and Wardle (2015) states "Writing involves ethical choices because every time we write for another person, we propose a relationship with other human beings, our readers" (p. 31). While some might be able to let it resonate with them, some may not be able to do the same. It was important to me to start off this honors thesis with a positionality statement and to also come into this honors thesis ready to defend my work, my research, and my writing. My goal is

to push back on the Standard American English that I have been taught over the years. To push back on what “good English” is and the beliefs of writing “properly”.

“You absolutely wrecked me.”

“Jalees please don’t say that”

My purpose

Quien soy? I often heard this question in regards of my identity in Christ? Who was I through Christ? Still the question has haunted me to this day. Now working on my honors thesis, there’s a purpose for who I am and what the purpose of this honors thesis is for and who I am. I found my identity within academia but I didn’t think it would come with its own obstacles and challenges of being who I am or that I would need to fight to keep my identity– The importance of being able to use your own voice and express yourself in writing honestly.

When I first came into academia, I had come from a family whose grandma was an immigrant from Chihuahua, Mexico. My family had struggled a lot growing up so the emphasis on women getting their education without being stopped by the men in their lives was crucial. The emphasis on being educated and proper was significant, along with that language, especially English should be used properly and formally. I didn’t want to sound like “one of those Mexicans.” I needed to prove to white people that I wasn’t like that. I needed to prove I was worth employing and that I was going to be set apart from others from it.

K-12 taught me this lesson of the importance of perfecting English from the beginning and that's all I wanted to do. This honors thesis will be exploring my life throughout academia,

how I came to grow and the unlearning and currently unlearning I am still experiencing in my language and writing

“Thank you”

The bridge called writing studies

. When I first began college, I wasn't really sure what I wanted to do with my life. I really loved English and literature. I was fascinated with Victorian literature and the classics, it made me feel smart and sophisticated. I was told I needed to do something that made money and to follow dreams just wasn't applicable and wouldn't support me. I almost fell down the speech pathology route but it didn't call out to me. Nothing called out to me the way writing did and at the end I found myself falling back to an English Major.

It was my life anyways for awhile I just drifted in and out of English classes making sure I perfected my writing. I wanted to be just like Oscar Wilde, Sylvia Plath, Emily Dickison, and all those gringos. Still my writing never really felt like me. I loved writing but I wasn't free because all that was on my mind was the fact that I needed to have perfection. Once I entered my first creative writing class, I had a creative writing mentor who saw potential and took me under her wing and another mentor who did the same for me. I will forever be grateful and indebted to them both especially at a time where I felt as if I was just floating by in academia.

But creative writing was my chance to run in the field of freedom. All the grammar rules, the shackles holding my wrists together were gone. I could have run ons, fragments, and stylistic choices that weren't going to be held up and circled in red pen marks that said “hey look! You forgot to add a comma or a period or whatever” and my identity was incorporated. I was new to codemeshing Young (2010) states “Code meshing blends dialects, international languages, local

idioms, chat-room lingo, and the rhetorical styles of various ethnic and cultural groups in both formal and informal speech acts” (p. 114). But I couldn’t write a poem about my family or my life without adding Spanish. Spanish is so integral to the way I view the world, the words that I hold dear to my heart, the words that haunt and comfort me. A poem that spoke about my life through my heart wasn’t complete without Spanish. I wrote in Spanish to connect with my community, to speak on issues in Latine communities that were often written off as that's just part of the culture.

I wrote to connect with my identity, I wrote because anywhere else my identity wouldn’t fit in with literature. As much as I loved literature it taught me that my language didn’t have room for it and neither did my own identity. But creative writing was my holy grail, it was my angel sent down from heaven disguised as an opening to writing studies to test my heart. I know it sounds troll but it really was; I yearned for that freedom for that identity because it's all I wanted for my own academic writing. I knew my identity but it wasn’t something I reflected on deeply especially not within academic I saved that for creative writing because it was the only room that I knew would allow me to speak on it.

Towards the end of my sophomore year as I was completing my creative writing minor, I needed an elective and saw that I had an option to take a writing and identity class. I didn’t know what to expect or rather who this random professor was. I didn’t want to take a risk but I knew I had to do it. So I entered 201 with a professor who came in swinging about language and that’s when I encountered *Should writers use they own English* by Dr. Vershawn Ashanti Young (2010) and there I was reading this article and I found myself agreeing with Stanley Fish for a good minute. Up until that point, I was just floating around in classes, not really learning that much, all my work was really going towards creative writing. I was eager to find skills and apply

them to poetry. But literature classes weren't teaching me much, all I could retain was I needed to perfect grammar rules. For so long that's all I yearned for, I would be a good writer if I could just perfect the grammar. I was trying so hard, to perfect the rules of grammar. In my head, I just had to get through another essay and grammar rules. I thought to myself I would only focus on creative writing so I wouldn't have to worry about it for that long.

No pues wow!!! Writing and Identity challenged the hell out of me but I couldn't help but love it. It was so good in theory! If only I could learn it and apply Young and Anzaldúa to my life but it's not realistic for a real world I would tell myself. So Bri laid down her no bucket telling me to grab some water. While I came with my sword and shield to a soothing river and she sat until I finally gave in, grabbing the bucket and drinking the water. I didn't go out without a fight, a fight that I really shouldn't have gave to her. I was so adamant on telling Bri writing the way you spoke was wrong, it wasn't feasible, and in my mind she was crazy. I was like she doesn't understand me. I remember telling her one time, you can do this work, talk how you speak because you are white. You can get away with these insane ideas because you are white. You will be taken seriously. I would never be taken seriously not in this way.

In my mind, I thought I will always be the Mexican girl with the father who works construction with a criminal record and a teen mom who wasn't able to finish college. I had something to prove and to me Bri didn't know that struggle. Eventually, I got out of that mindset and fell into writing studies whole heartedly. I got a job at my writing center and found myself eager to learn. Writing studies gave me purpose and the writing center exposed me to so many students that made me not just a better writer. But a better peer, student, tutor, and provided me with so much knowledge and the importance of students relationships with writing. I told Bri one time, "you absolutely wrecked me", and she went "Jalees please don't say that". I think it's

funny because it's true she knocked down everything I learned about academia. Forced me to realize just how inherently racist writing can be and I had to reflect back on myself and what I really wanted from academia.

I mean did I really just want to become only a creative writing professor because I loved poetry and that was my baby. To be fair, it very much still is my baby but I had to reflect. I didn't want to be torn apart because I know my grammar was up there like others. I think that I thought I could hide myself away in creative writing somehow. I did want to do something amazing, but literature I couldn't stand not being able to have my own language or identity shine through writing. Nothing about it called out to me anymore, I craved more but at the time I didn't really know what more was out there. I'll admit it, I like to imagine myself on a journey, searching for my kingdom. I am the knight in shining armor and maybe it's corny but I faced so much insecurity towards this work. I didn't think I was fit, I struggled and most of all I didn't think I was even smart enough because I still didn't perfect grammar and its rules in it to make it in a field that wasn't creative writing and allowed me linguistic agency.

Originally this honors thesis wasn't going to do anything remotely multimodal at all. I just didn't care for multimodality nor did I really understand any of it Adler-Kassner and Wardle (2015) states "Multimodal means "multiple + mode." In contemporary writing studies, a mode refers to a way of meaning making or communicating." (p. 42) I was interested in students' relationships with writing and telling my story as a woman in academia. Multimodality was an after thought. Sure everyone else had dope ass projects but my skills were best suited in pen and paper. Something that felt solid for me and I simply just didn't think I was creative or anything of the sort. So what lead me down that rabbit hole? Honestly, I started playing a lot of Roblox with my best friend Ruby. Eventually we joked about doing an assignment for Bri on Roblox,

Eventually me and Ruby did a Roblox video and then that summer I fell down a rabbit hole on more multimodal videos as I was taking a British Literature class I made video essays and roblox videos and I felt able to focus on the actual text rather than just grammar. It was just fun and I liked being able to talk like myself, I didn't have to worry about sounding smart, poetic, or like Shakespeare on a page. To me, I was just being silly and funny. I mean how hilarious was it that I did a final project in Berry Ave. with Ruby and my little cousin? I died laughing and it was my favorite project ever but it was never meant to be taken serious. It didn't mean anything to me. Academic at its core is still embedded in being serious and besides you think those white old ass men would take it and be like woah this is amazing!! Like no, I needed to be realistic, it was cool yeah but it wasn't solid. Besides my honors thesis had to be serious and academic. It had to mean something and for some reason I didn't think Multimodality would even fit into it.

Needless to say, Bri convinced me to incorporate multimodality. I talked about how I felt in my multimodal projects and just the liberation I felt and Bri told me she saw huge improvements in my writing within multimodal projects. So why was it different for me? So I told her because it just didn't make me feel pressured, I was more inclined to feel like I was just having a conversation and that's all I wanted from it.

Honestly, I didn't want to do multimodality or Roblox. I was scared to fail and fall, it just didn't seem too appealing. But I put my trust into Bri because she brought me here. Believed in my potential and wanted me to grow and do great things. I was hesitant at the lack of research and if everyone would laugh and think this was just a huge waste of time and was a joke. I didn't want to be a joke. I wanted to prove myself to white academia that I deserved a space alongside them. In my mind, the only way to do that was to write on paper still. Bri seems to always extend her hand out to me and I took a leap of faith and trusted her. I realized I can't be the only person

who feels this way about multimodality so what was next for me? Obviously to get that son of a bi- I mean IRB who I love and respect dearly done and get on with interviewing and writing this honors thesis. Needless to say, take the leap even if you're scared.

“Me puedes dar 3 tacos de lengua con todo and a side of linguistic bias?”

Chapter 3: The Literature Review

In executing this research my focus was to learn more about the ways my academic pathway had impacted me. Along with what felt essential to my research and how I came about this honors thesis and what was important to my audience. I'll be honest writing this honors thesis has never felt more challenging now that it is finally here. I wonder if I am fit for this? If I deserve to tell my story and if my voice even matters. I know I am learning and growing but the older I become the further I spiral into academia the more shut down I start to feel. The more I want to run away and never return. Maybe it's from the fact that in my deepest core I want to be taken seriously, have "formal writing" and sound white—a linguistic bias I can never seem to let go from myself. All the scholars I am about to bring into my research encourage young scholars to find their voices, to learn from their mistakes, and to keep going because we need people who aren't white in academia.

When I first started this literature review to me it was a no brainer Young and Anzaldúa were going to be into it. CAUSE DUH! You think I wouldn't include the most foundational authors who literally brought me into writing studies? Who encouraged and empowered me to use my voice, my tongue, and identity within my writing? Who I admire and look up to? In my study I talk about wandering around academia with no set idea of my writing let alone how my identity informed this? So Young stayed on my mind as did Anazdula bringing me back to the scholars who brought me here.

Writing and Identity

Before I got into writing studies I did so much creative work I was hungry for more. It was bound for me to find Anzaldua and even though I admire her risk taking I know that code-switching and code meshing needed to stay within their own element. This element for me at the time was creative writing. I thought of my own language oppression and though I was able to relate I still chastised her ideas about academia away. Anzaldúa says, “If a person, Chicana or Latina, has a low estimation of my native tongue, she also has a low estimation of me. Often with mexicanas y latinas we’ll speak English as a neutral language” (p. 80). Anzaldúa spends a good portion of her book *Borderlands/La Frontera* speaking on how important it is to her to keep her native tongue, but how there's forms of Spanish that have been adapted and how it is often looked down upon as well. Proving that these are ways that attitudes especially affect these languages. This quote included me as well as I viewed her with a low estimation of our shared native tongue putting down the language when I shouldn’t have done it further proving the point Anzaldúa provided to her readers.

In the article, “How to Tame a Wild Tongue” by Gloria Anazdula. She speaks on the ways that her tongue had been taken away and tamed in academia. The different ways she had to navigate living with her tongue being taken away. She speaks "I've never seen anything as strong or as stubborn," he says. And I think, how do you tame a wild tongue, train it to be quiet, how do you bridle and saddle it? How do you make it lie down?" (p. 33). Gloria Anazdula asks this beginning question to get her audience to think about language using the metaphor of being at the dentist to describe the ways white academia has oppressed her and brought her down throughout it. Asking her audience if it possible to tame a wild tongue in this sense a tongue that doesn’t conform to white standardized English.

Linguistic Justice

In the book, *This bridge called my back*, we are met with different stories of women fighting against linguistic biases in academia. However, I want to focus on Audre Lorde's chapter on "The Master's Tools will never dismantle the master's house." This chapter focuses specifically on arguments created that speak on how if we are able to "perfect" English we can use it to critique the oppressor that has given us this language that isn't ours. Lorde states, "What does it mean when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy? It means that only the most narrow perimeters of change are possible and allowable." (94) However, Audre Lorde speaks on how this argument isn't durable and rather reinforces a harmful system of patriarchy that will never find this to be a solid argument. Similarly Dr. Baker-Bell (2020) says "Within a Linguistic Justice framework, excuses such as 'that's just the way it is' cannot be used as justification for Anti-Black Linguistic Racism, white linguistic supremacy, and linguistic injustice" (p. 7). These two scholars are able to agree on the ways that linguistic biases play an huge emphasis into the ways education is taught as it preserves harmful stereotypes that are used to have positions of power that only further oppress voices that aren't seen as "educated" or "proper" in the sense of Standardized American English.

Codemeshing

In the article *Should Writers Write Their own English*, Young (2010) speaks against a well known theorist Stanley Fish and his argument about why students should be eager to write proper but Young speaks about why students should be allowed to speak their own English and the importance of making writing accessible for students. Young (2010) argues for linguistic justice for students and why it is so crucial and important to let our students be able to bring their own languages into the classroom. Young (2010) states, "But don't nobody's language, dialect, or style make them 'vulnerable to prejudices.' It's ATTITUDES. It be the way folks with some

power perceive other people's language" (110). Young (2010) is speaking on how languages aren't inherently harmful or vulnerable to prejudices. It is rather how people perceive them and their attitudes towards them as it proves the fact that once we change the ways that we view our own biases and attitudes we can change the way we view language. This specific quote from Young has been sticking out to me. The more I write my thesis, the more I see it in the students I work with at the writing center. How vulnerable the attitudes we shape around languages make students feel and the ways they struggle within their writing.

In hopes of academic honesty, I decided to include Stanley Fish's article that Young is referring to in "Should Writers Use They Own English." This also represents the counterargument to linguistic justice as a whole. In the article, "What Should Colleges Teach? Pt. 3" by Stanley Fish, we are brought arguments of the way language in the college classroom should be addressed when it comes to learning proper and formal writing. Fish argues that students today don't understand important grammar structures and rules that are inhibiting their writing. Fish (2009) states "Behind the [CCCC's Students' Right to Their Own Language] resolution is a theoretical argument. Linguistic forms, it is said, are not God-given; they are the conventional products of social/cultural habit and therefore none of them is [sic] naturally superior or uniquely 'correct.'" Referring to CCCC's NCTE Students Rights to Their Own Language statement (SRTOL) Fish brings to attention how when students are allowed to write how they speak it is not feasible for them to carry their language in academia and should be eager to learn a new language. Young (2010) responses to this argument by pointing out that he's referring to multicultural students who are already codeswitching, making Fish's argument a disingenuous argument.

However, students aren't often made aware of their rights to their language (SRTOL) and even if they did know, most students fear speaking out and being reprimanded. Instead accepting that there is a "time and a place" for their language. NCTE states: "We affirm the students' right to their own patterns and varieties of language -- the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style" (p. 1). NCTE and cultivating critical language both speak to me. I'm realizing the ways that codemeshing and SRTOL spoke to each other on a level, in recognizing restriction students tend to have during their own writing--the fear of being reprimanded. Though both of these scholars build on these conversations agreeing that students do have rights to their own language and should be able to use it as they please within their writing.

In *Cultivating Critical Language Awareness in the Writing Classroom*, Professor Bri assigned me to read a chapter of Code-Mixed Writing that would help inform me on codemeshing and students. Now the chapter focused on the ways students can take rhetorical risks within their classrooms. The answer being through code meshing and while they mention the ways that codemeshing is able to liberate these students, students face great risks when it comes to accepting taking rhetorical risks specifically with instructors. Shapiro et al. (2022) states,

This sort of writing can feel 'risky' for a few reasons: First, it may not fit neatly into the genres that students are used to reading, so the writer has to trust that readers will engage with the work with openness and curiosity. Students must also trust that their instructors will 'grade' the work appropriately. (p. 245)

Back when I was a baby scholar and first taking Writing and Identity with Bri, I had pushed back against using my own language, even though she said that I was allowed to do it, I didn't have

this trust in her as I said I can use my own language but what happens when you fail me anyways? I didn't have this trust in her as an instructor just yet. I sought out other ways to use my own voice and I found the place I felt the most comfortable at was within video form.

Multimodality

When I came across multimodality originally, I was hesitant to even write an honors thesis involving it as my own forms of multimodal work included Roblox videos or video essays where I pretended to be a YouTuber that I made for my professor's class. After several conversations about how this should inform my work I decided that multimodality plays another prominent role in this thesis as it encourages students to explore and express their identities through multimodality. In the book, *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts of Writing Studies*, we learn the concept "All writing is multimodal" a concept that explains the definition of multimodality within writing and its importance. Multimodality is communication in different forms (genres) of media. Many writers don't realize that writing, or composing, goes beyond the written form of texts. Composing happens in the mind, even when creating multimodal projects. Ball and Charlton (2010) both speak on the ways that multimodality plays a role within writing specifically within writing studies. Ball and Charlton (2010) state that "In multimodal theory, the definition of mode is complicated to distribute equal emphasis on how meanings are created, delivered, and circulated through choices in design, material composition, tools and technologies, delivery systems, and interpretive senses." (p. 44) Multimodality holds importances to writers as it goes beyond what was traditionally taught within academia which is that writing is solely ever done on paper and nothing else.

Trauma Informed Pedagogy

If multimodality can open up the door for allowing healing, it's important to place the emphasis on trauma informed pedagogy. As going through the process of healing informs itself on the ways trauma informed pedagogy is important to keep in mind within writing projects where students often feel the pressure to overshare their experiences with traumatic life events and the ways writing trauma can play a role within it. Molloy (2016) says:

Writing to heal, particularly when it is meant to address trauma, serves two purposes, say proponents: to help writers process that which muddies an inner life and to connect personal and social problems in order to advocate for important causes. (p. 135)

As writing is used to heal, Molly takes this time to reflect on the ways that writing is used to heal and why multimodality plays this role. Molly (2016) said:

Acknowledging the inherent richness of working multimodally, then, some of the assignments approach writing as healing through the idea of symbolic recasting, or using opaque and abstract symbols through which to convey complex and painful experiences, and multimodal assemblages, characterized by rich mixes of alphabetic text, images, and sounds, as replacements for linear, written narratives. (p. 137)

Later speaking to the ways that multimodality is important for healing through writing trauma.

All these scholars work together by coming together to accept the ways that healing, trauma, and multimodality have a role within each other. The ways that trauma and healing are so intertwined within each other. As well as the authors building up upon the ways that multimodality speaks to the ways that expressing your identity is important in this work and for students to do so in their work. Building off multimodal theory and having the multimodality to help cultivate writing relationships as well.

Young speaks on the ways students are oppressed from their languages and the prejudices that are held within them. While Anazdula builds this up by speaking on the ways that Chicano language is viewed negatively to Latinx ways of viewing, forms of Spanish as lesser than or informal that they are often ridiculed in this sense. I've been thinking about Young's quote that I cited a lot, about what it means and to the linguistic biases that I still hold today. The more I have talks about writing studies, the more I inform people why linguistic justice is important the more I find that all roads come back to Young and Anazdula.

Trauma is such a rich foundation for this research as so much of it works into the ways that it is a prominent factor to take into consideration within writing classrooms. My research is informed through my autoethnography. The difficulties I faced being a child in a public school system that often deemed me not smart because of the significant days of school I had missed or the traumatic experiences that manifested in clingy behaviors towards my mother because of the burden I was facing dealing with a father who had addiction at home. Putting all this on top of a speech problem I had as well wasn't a great case for anyone. I spent years struggling to pronounce my R's, W's, and sk sounds. I worked tirelessly to get out of speech and the only place I felt able to express myself was through my writing where someone understood me and as I grew and overcame a difficult semester due to my fathers addiction once again. I realized just how much trauma has an impact on not only myself but my other peers as well. How so much of this works itself into academia and writing. Tayles is a scholar I came across who speaks on how writing and trauma informs itself in a classroom. In the article, "Trauma-Informed Writing

Pedagogy: Ways to Support Student Writers Affected by Trauma and Traumatic Stress” Tayles (2021) speaks on how relevant trauma in the classrooms are for students and instructors:

Anecdotally, community college writing instructors assume that trauma is prevalent among their students based on students’ confessions and disclosures. Research on the prevalence of exposure to potentially traumatic experiences in undergraduate populations confirms these suspicions as the majority of studies find that more than half of study participants report exposure to at least one potentially traumatic experience across a lifetime (Anders et al.). (p. 296)

Tayles further analyzes that specifically within community college writing that trauma is so normalized within writing classrooms and even expected for students to share within their writing. As a high number of undergraduate students specifically are within this range of students who experience trauma and it reflects in their writing classrooms. Students expressed their trauma within writing showing the ways we often encourage trauma from students

To further reflect on the ways trauma carries itself within the classrooms it is important to note how we can deal with the trauma that appears in students writing itself. Davidson author of *"Trauma-Informed Practices for Postsecondary Education: A Guide."* states, “Colleges are systems, and creating a trauma-informed climate requires the entire campus community—faculty members, administrators, staff members, counselors, and clinicians—to deepen its shared understanding of trauma’s impacts on learning and agree to a campus wide approach” (p. 14).

Further applying that since trauma is relevant within our writing and work it is up to colleges to start to create more trauma informed pedagogies and practices that can apply to helping students. Both Tayles and Davidson are able to echo the importance of trauma that carries its way not only into writing trauma but as well into universities itself. By further understanding the effects this

has on students specifically both authors chose to uplift the ways that it is important to recognize this trauma. Trauma is a strong hold in our lives, we all carry some form of it. Writing is linked to identity how do we not expect it to show up in our learning environments? It speaks to the foundation of this thesis, recognizing that trauma is rooted within academia both of these scholars are able to rooting themselves in this work.

Creative writing and writing studies tend to have a strong relationship with each other, often kind of being seen as a way to bridge a gap together. Students feel safe in the area of creative writing as perfectionism of grammar isn't as prevalent as writing an academic essay that demands perfection. Creative writing itself feels as if it is in an odd place not being able to direct align itself within the field of literature, there's this gap of where can creative writing can find itself belonging more? In the article "One Simple Word: From Creative Writing to Creative Writing Studies" scholar Mayers (2009) states "But I also believe that the emergence of creative writing studies as both a counterpart to and a rival of creative writing provides opportunities that we would be wise not to squander." (p. 219) Mayers hopes to bridge a gap within this work and create opportunities looking at the ways that we can work together rather than separate and make things more difficult and pit certain fields of English against each other but rather have it come together this way.

In the article *Writing Wounded: Trauma, Testimony, and Critical Witness in Literacy* we are asked to think about the ways that trauma and writing for their own voices can be impacted for writers and their stories. As Dutro (2011) states:

The demands of the kinds of pedagogical testimony and witness for which I am arguing are different, however, than those placed on readers (as in Felman & Laub's [1992] work)

or on writers describing their own and others' lives (though those demands are weighty indeed) and seem to require a re-visioning of those metaphors. (p. 5)

This text is expanding on the ways that trauma pedagogy needs to be impacted on. Paulo Freire *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is a book that educates us on the ways that teachers in particular have treated their students along with challenging teachers as well to think about their roles in the classroom, how the oppression we have faced as a whole has created an oppressive system that doesn't allow any room for growth. Freire states "Education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students" (p. 45). Freire explains how student and teacher relationships in education are equal and contain power dynamics that further contributes to the pedagogy of being oppressed that isn't traditionally addressed in academia. These two articles disagree with each other as Freire speaks on the ways teacher and student relationships are corrupted and destroyed as they perpetuate a dynamic where the student is expected to sit and listen while they learn nothing from their teachers. Freire (1968) states "Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, contracting, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other." (p. 45) Freire speaks on the intentionally ways education can be oppressive.

To further expand on Freire and how Young as mentioned earlier speaks on how we impose our languages on students, that is a response to Fish's articles about teaching students to be eager about learning a new language that consist of proper and formal English. As Fish encourages college composition to be more rooted in learning structured and grammar rules and strictly adhering to this, it is important to remember that in through this Freire disagrees with this arguments and shows the ways that even imposing "educated" rules on students is still taking a

hand into oppressing students and shaming them for their language. Both scholars disagree on the concept of education and do not come into agreement in this way.

Linguistic biases plays a huge role into higher education and the ways it impacts our educational system and teaches our students. Dr. Baker Bell (2020) says: “Their voices and stories matter! And as educators and researchers, we must listen and engage their perspectives in our research, theories about language learning, and pedagogical practices.” (p. 40) As we get deeper into higher education recounting experiences from ESL writers and personal experiences from the authors as well. Clements and Petray (2021) state: “These impact our speech, and often stereotypes connected with these factors are socially encoded or perceived by listeners in our speech. This encoding occurs through linguistic labels” (p. 2). Refers to the ways higher education holds a huge impact on the linguistic biases that are constantly being enforced on students. It notes the ways that when we don’t confront these linguistic biases we rather continue to perpetuate harmful stereotypes about language that continue to harm students and professors that rather just contribute to the harmful effects of linguistic discrimination.

As I am finishing up my literature review, my professor assigned me one more text to add on to this paper. At first, I was like not another text!!! But getting through this I definitely did feel a lot better about where I was coming from, the thing is code meshing was a process I struggled with when I first got into writing studies. I pushed back against it and felt as if it was hard to read and it was just an idea that didn’t have a place within academia. I mean creative writing of course but that’s because creative writing in my eyes wasn’t meant to be taken “seriously” in that way. Eventually, my professor Bri pushed me back against this idea and I fell face first into code meshing.

They mentioned feeling awkward and restricted when it came to other classes. Even mentioning the pushback they face when they first started using codemeshing themselves. As I had these conversations (interviews) I realized how much I thought back to NCTE's Students Rights to Their Language. I made the connection that many of the gaps in research that I found was that though multimodality and code meshing are words that we are constantly using, they don't seem as if they oughta go hand in hand but they do. This research is all based on multimodality and code meshing yet there's a significant lack of codemeshing and multimodality and the ways they inform each other.

My literature review has been a tedious, tough, and fun process. I came into this literature review dreading it, I had no set page limit to it maybe the most being six pages? I didn't expect to get up to almost 11 pages. The more I read, spoke, and went through my qualitative interviews the more I realized the importance that came with informing this work. To take arguments from the other side to connect it with my experiences. Even through my own honors thesis where I am setting the rules for my writing. I found that I am still restricting my tongue. Still holding my breath in order to sound "academic" it's crazy to think about it after a literature review where I back up my very own research on why it is important to use your own language. What might this say about linguistic justice? But what if I said I don't feel fit? I've felt this way for years and yet finally getting the shot to write about myself and the experiences. I still can't believe it's here and that I got the chance to provide my research about linguistic justice. As after all these years into my academic career, all this research is crucial to understanding my own work and adding on to other scholars. After all everything that follows is what writing studies has taught and shaped me to think about beyond just what literature once taught me.

There's an evil altar that I see in my dreams. Demanding more of my tongue, pleading for me to give in and become one apart of it. Here I stand, before the white dollies, tongues, and crumpled paper ready to burn this academic trauma on this altar. A different sacrifice than what has been expected for me.

Your tongue, My paper, My paper, and Your tongue

There are times where I felt like I was wandering aimlessly through academia attending class after class. Words blurred their ways into my computer screen spending hours perfecting grammar looking up resources that could improve grammar and have me learn them. Everything was so structured it was always a hamburger method and I had to learn to adapt to White Mainstream English. But getting into multimodality proved something was different and if I felt free then why wouldn't others feel like me? I just couldn't get my head wrapped around it. I felt different and so that's how it all came about I wanted to see what was different. I came into this project with three main questions.

- Do students feel more comfortable employing code meshing techniques in a multimodal project (as opposed to a written one),
- How they were able to employ code meshing techniques?,
- What are the effects that are left behind on their code meshing confidence?

My questions were developed based on how I felt after creating multimodal projects. I loved writing but there was a huge difference in how I felt. I could yell this is some stupid ass shit! Who would question it? Nobody! I felt liberated and free to be myself through it all. So I came to the conclusion it can't just be me who feels this way? Verdad? So the questions were developed to test if other students had similar experiences. From there, we did qualitative interviews to assess if there were other students who felt this liberation in codemeshing and multimodality just like I was feeling. (spoiler alert: I slayed the house down)

“*Wandering through Methods*”

Chapter 4: Methods

A method I applied to this Honors Thesis was autoethnography that highlighted the importance of using my own personal experiences as a women in color in academia in order to support my arguments on multimodality and code meshing. I wanted to highlight every feeling, every thought, and every insecurity to show that not only did I feel this way but others can relate and speak to these experiences. Ettorre states, “I am telling a story without borders, and yet I am an insider and an outsider – a living, embodied crossroads of words, flesh, emotions, interpretations and humanity” (p. 6) I took such great inspiration from the multiple autoethnographies that I read and how I decided to tell my story along with uplifting others. It reminded me of the work that is created to give power back to marginalized voices and the goal of this method was to do the same.

I went through this research recruiting students through an IRB which I picked students who were 18+, have completed or were in the process of completing a multimodal project, and were currently students at Nevada State University. Overall, I was able to gather 7 participants. I had 5 students who identified as non white. Along with the qualitative method in mind along with In Vivo coding that helped informed and analyzed my data. Saldaña the author of *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* states:

In vivo’s root meaning is ‘in that which is alive,’ and as a code refers to a word or short phrase from the actual language found in the qualitative data record, “the terms used by [participants] themselves” (Strauss, 1987, p. 33). Folk or indigenous terms are

participant-generated words from members of a particular culture, subculture, or microculture.” (p.74)

I found myself feeling very intertwined with this coding method as it helped me realize what I want to take away from my coding? I thought about the ways that my voice had been silenced in academia and what that meant to me. How isolating and alone I felt in my pathway, there was no one to listen or tell me my tongue mattered in academia. I owed it to my participants to do at least this for them. Give them the space for their voices to be heard and to be highlighted throughout it.

October 24,

I got my live grading done with a professor. I like how I am writing this like it's a recorded and documented event. In my heart it is because I haven't had a paper torn apart like this in years let alone post writing studies. I went into live grading and I asked a question in a genuine and respectful tone. Still my professor got defensive and came swinging at me. It wasn't a yell yell but she was upset and I know it. So I did what I know best. Diffusing the situation this isn't a new thing to me. I've done it many times growing up and I know to agree, be calm, and thank the person for their help. I made myself small and digestible just like all those times before in school and at home. Authority figures were to be respected and never questioned. My professor called me an auditory learner and she said it means I learn by listening. To add 10+ hours of reading each week. I read every day for each class I have, I never go a day without reading. I didn't argue because I need to be small and digestible. I learned to listen to 'constructive criticism' and I took it. But hearing those words I knew what she meant by an auditory learner. It was a nice way of calling me a multilingual writer. Like if it's some kind of an insult. Spanish isn't my first language, it was spoken in my house and I know it. I still can't speak it that well but I think that comes from my speech problems. Saying words in English is hard but in Spanish its harder. R's, W's, S', and V's don't argue with my tongue. Those words touched my wounds as if it was made of salt. Rubbing so gently against the wound that won't close up. What I worked so hard for to prove that my grandma's immigration wasn't for nothing. My need for perfection in the English language was to prove that some stupid Mexican could make it. To prove I could make it and I could know the English language so well. I wanted that validation and after entering writing studies I had to reflect on that. On what internalized racism I was

upholding. So once we ended live grading, I ended up with an 85 which is good! But his words burned my wounds. I shut close my laptop and cried. I contemplated my writing, if I was good at writing. If I should even complete my honors thesis. Did that professor see right through me? Do my professors think that I made the Nepantla students bad writers now? Was I really a terrible writer? Like I knew deep down that I really was a bad writer. That the potential my mentor Bri saw in me was just a waste? My worst fears felt like they were being affirmed in front of me. So I cried and cried because was I stupid? My writing wasn't going to change the world, it was mediocre just as I believed. Maybe I wasn't cut out to be an academic let alone a writer. I used to hesitate so badly to call myself a writer or poet because I didn't believe I was worthy of those titles. I cried and cried and cried more. But I thought to myself, I have the tools in my toolbox to know better. To have support and confirmation that I am not a bad writer. To know why my honors thesis matters so much. But if I still let it get to me then how are the students who don't understand or know about writing studies? What about them? Did someone else cry? Did this ruin their writing relationship? I have this yearning inside me, its the same one I had with the Nepantla students to save their writing relationship. To teach them to hold it dear to their hearts and never let anyone break it. Writing has the power to liberate doesn't it? Why can't I save their relationships? Where would I even start? It's not like I can take the class time to teach them beyond my professors' harmful feedback. Still I can't help but yearn to save, and it might be a savior complex in me. Still I know this isn't the end. That professor won't get to keep my tongue. My language leaves its marks on paper. It bleeds red to remind you of who I am. It stands strong resting on the roof of my mouth. It's powerful and I am tired of holding it back.

“Studious Ahh Foos”

Chapter 5: Findings

Throughout my literature review, I discussed all the ways trauma, multimodality, and code meshing played such a huge role in creating multimodality projects and how it could liberate students. After sitting down with each one of my Robloxians, I was left with so much data. I started by collecting what patterns made its way within my research questions, if they even answered my research questions. To my surprise they did start to answer my research questions and what I found was a lot.

Finding 1: Academic Language defined by participants

First I found that my participants tended to refer to academic language as professional, white, and White Mainstream English. I noticed a pattern with how my multilingual participants often became rigid and more serious when we got to speaking on how they viewed academic language. As if I had some secret professor who's strict on standard academic language waiting for them in the corner to go HA I KNEW IT and threaten to dock down points for an nonexistent grade.

I want to speak on the parts I highlighted for my participants that stood out for me the most. Robloxian 7 was one of the participants whose body language and even language changed completely when we spoke on academic language. It signaled to me some kind of writing trauma or even linguistic discrimination they may have faced as everything became more formal within their language and answering of the question. Robloxian 7 states “I quickly understood that essays and academic language were not supposed to be personal. They were supposed to be

removed and almost from-from your own experience.” Robloxian 7 mentioned a loss of identity within language and later goes on to speak on how academic language is only “accessible to those who are educated” signaling a disconnection from academia in general.

Robloxian 5 stated “it was just kind of like a realization moment of like okay like college isn't going to just be like strict standard academia,” admitting that when they came into academia they fully expected everything to be strict standard academic language and then goes on to tell me about how a professor allowing them to codemesh helped them to realize standard academic language wasn't just what they needed to adhere to within their writing.

Finding 2: Students report feeling liberated

Another finding I found was that students felt and reported that they felt liberated or used synonyms of the word within their projects. Every participant had their own version of how they felt liberated within these projects that they creating at the time. Robloxian 7 expressed so much to me about just having the means to express themselves through a multimodal project and what it meant for them. Robloxian 7 said:

It was very like an everyday spanglish form of language that I was using in that video game. That was liberating in a way because it's like, you're using things from your own experience. You don't have to like fake it.

They mentioned that within their video game they created they felt they didn't need to fake their identity. The experience was liberating for them and allowed for so much self expression to be used within their multimodal project. Similarly Robloxian 6 mentioned:

Um, it really felt like it really felt liberating. Um, I was like, oh my god, like I can just write the way that I talk, and I can write the way that maybe this woman would talk and

not necessarily me. Um, it really opened my eyes to a lot of like, to genre bending in general and like, yeah.

And just like Robloxians 7 they both express this emotion of liberation.

Finding 3: Students were unaware they were using codemeshing techniques

My Robloxians when asked about their codemeshing and the techniques they used I found that they were often unaware of even using techniques at all. I would literally be like hey what code meshing techniques did you use? And some of the participants would be like I didn't use that and then troll me completely and go on to describe a code meshing technique.

Robloxians 5 says:

I feel like if I'm more comfortable others will be more comfortable around me as well and technique wise I feel like it's basically just been, like, trying to adopt the way that I speak into the way that I write. Yeah. I'm not sure of, like, any specific techniques.

Then Robloxian 1 talked about how they felt using codemeshing and how they disagreed on the idea of codemeshing being an actual thing as they feel it becomes more natural than anything. As they say:

I do use code meshing more, although I would say I don't know if I necessarily use techniques and not so much so that I want to say I disagree with the idea of code meshing techniques, but almost like code meshing becomes natural or is natural. So I won't say that I intentionally used code meshing techniques, but I would say, I will say that I did code mesh.

Robloxians 5 goes on to describe their relationship with code meshing to be a bit more complex that shows way more of their thinking into code meshing and the techniques themselves.

Students felt their identity was concealed through WME:

Another finding was that students also felt their identity was being concealed through White Mainstream English. A lot of my findings included my participants speaking on just how concealed their identity was and how much self expression was forced to be put away. Robloxian 5 states

Linguistic identity shows up there because I'm like incorporating my language into my writing, which is like the first time I've done that. My racial and cultural side is showing up because I'm showing the way that my family and generations before me have handled that type of thing and what the norm is. And social too. I feel like all the aspects shined through in that project because that project was about me and my family.

Robloxian 5 dealt with a project that was heavily impacted by grief and their culture and they felt they wouldn't been able to do this project had their cultural and identity not be included within it. Robloxian 7 expands on though they had the linguistic agency to speak on their identity before they still felt restricted in showing their identity completely: "But the-the reason why I wanted my video game like linked to my identity was because It Because I have written about my identity before like an essay forms or like short story form." As they go on to speak on why a video game linked to their identity felt easier to incorporate their identity rather then turning to writing or even creative writing. Which is interesting to note since creative writers typically feel more freedom in this area.

Finally my last finding included realizing that the multimodal genre composition is freeing. After having a wonderful conversation with Robloxian 1 says:

I recorded videos and I found it more fun. I found it more engaging. I found it easier to do, easier to want to do. I didn't procrastinate as much and I enjoyed myself more. So I

think all those feelings come from And my, I think my accomplishments and accomplishment and my sense of accomplishment and pride definitely increased by using a multimodal approach and code meshing naturally through it.

Robloxian 1 talked about his work being so much easier and how engaging it felt throughout it.

To put this alongside Robloxian 3 states

And I would kind of shut down and never do that again. So all of those, I had a few of those experiences that kind of just built up. And then for a while I was like, well, no one's going to take me seriously if I don't just focus on traditional academic writing, right?

This student felt worried that if they continued to do traditional academic writing that was the only way they were going to be taken seriously. Meanwhile, having the liberty to do multimodal projects allowed them this freedom. Finally my conversation with Robloxian 5 implemented this finding to me. As they say:

And I think that my language is just a little bit more comfortable, I think, in those kinds of projects or in this project. Um, because in a typical essay, I still feel like like in any classes other than Professor 1 classes. Yeah, I felt very like like I have to go back to how it was like drilled in my head in high school of like You need to be formal you need to be academic.

That being able to leave the drilled in ideas of what it means to conform to White Mainstream English they felt the liberty to express themselves and be more comfortable within their language.

All of this research showed me patterns of what each one of my participants had a common thread in kneading a mantelito as I watched my grandma sew they all were different but

connected piece by piece, each lending a thread to the other in order to become a beautiful mantelito. These experiences and data showed just how each participant impacted the other without knowing it. Seeing the ways they each built or disagreed with each other.

“FREIRE IF YOU CAN HEAR US PLEASE SAVE US”

Chapter 6: Discussions

Throughout this whole process with each participant I realized how much that giving these students voices were so important for everything. Through my findings I found myself going back almost exclusively to my threshold concepts of writing studies or pedagogy of the oppressed as I went through with in vivo coding. I thought not only about my participants being students but also my role as a student in the classroom. How much I felt restricted in my own writing and just oppressed. I was used to just taking information from my professors because they knew more and what was best for me. Freire states: “Education is suffering from narration sickness” (p. 44). My participants taught me so much about what I wanted to take from this project and what was the most important. I found that allowing for code meshing was liberating. Which doesn’t come as much as a surprise honestly, Anzadula (1987) states: “So if you want to really hurt me, talk badly about my language. Ethnic Identity is twin skin to linguistic identity– I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself.” (81) Each one of my participants talked about the importance of having codemeshing and just how liberated my participants felt from it.

Codemeshing seemed to be a difficult topic for my participants, it was either that they were aware of what techniques they were using or that they had no idea. Originally I thought

could this pattern be due to a form of insecurity. I was instantly brought back to when I first started poetry. I didn't even want to format a poem because in my mind I was so insecure and doubtful that I could even be a poet that formatting a poem was difficult for me. So naturally I thought to myself maybe this is something similar? But the more work I put in to understanding and sat down with Bri. I realized these students knew their techniques and literally described them so it wasn't so much a insecurity but rather a lack of knowledge which brought me back to that in order for students to recognize their code meshing techniques they needed to be taught along with that instructors need the professional development to teach this to students in order for students to better identify these code meshing techniques.

Students felt as if their identity was being concealed through White Mainstream English as well. My participants often mentioned how they felt their identity was finally being properly represented within their multimodal projects and how they wouldn't be able to shine through White Mainstream English which was involving your typical standard essays. They felt that through having their identity in different forms of media it was easier to highlight the cultural, linguistic, and social parts of their identities and the importance of it all.

Finally I found that multimodality allows for risk taking and students were more inclined to take these risks because multimodality was liberating and allowed them to show more of their language and identity within these projects. Clements and Petray (2021) states:

This sort of writing can feel “risky” for a few reasons: First, it may not fit neatly into the genres that students are used to reading, so the writer has to trust that readers will engage with the work with openness and curiosity. Students must also trust that their instructors will “grade” the work appropriately.”(p. 245)

Although my students had trust in place with their instructors it allowed them to be ready to take these rhetorical risks within their writing. It allowed them to find new genres and learn new skills throughout their writing through multimodality. Overall, all my participants found themselves in patterns and trends that allowed me to see how my participants informed this work.

“Know Your Limits Foo”

Chapter 5: Limitations

Through this research, I interviewed 7 participants each who came eager with their own stories and experiences on a journey of multimodality and code meshing. My limitations within this research presented many complications that could be seen as research that could later on be expanded upon. . Going into this research, I realized that my limitations was my sample size of 7 participants as I wouldn't have a bigger group than that my answers would be limited to what I was looking for and the possibility that I wouldn't be provided with more context than what I was looking for. It also included students of a limited amount of instructors who allowed for multimodality within their classes being a small serving institution there was only so many students that allowed multimodality and codemeshing within their classes. For my process, I found that because I had a definition of multimodality, I had later asked students to define what they thought of multimodality. Students ended up using my definition as their own. I was also limited to Nevada State University and Hispanic Serving Institution that presented an ideal population because NSU is mostly 42% who identify as Hispanic involving students of two to three instructors that allowed multimodality within their classes which made it harder to find more students that explored multiple modes and let alone knew what multimodality was as well.

Results could have varied had I had more students and a bigger scope than just Nevada state university but safe to say that I know my limits foo.

Chapter 6: Jalees's Everything, Everywhere, All at once:

Dr. Jalees Tamayo

When I first started this research, I wanted it to solely be about my experience as a women of color in academia. I wanted representation that I wasn't seeing anywhere else and if I did, it was very scarce. I also wanted to represent who I used to be before going into writing studies. The ways that I talked about language and beliefs I had about academia as a whole.

This fictionalized interview between myself and me with a doctorate was originally supposed to come before my data. I wanted it to work alongside the data and inform what my participants had said about themselves. I thought this would work best, but as we got to the end of this honors thesis. Me and Bri decided that this might just work better at the end. To put the final nail in the coffin, of who I used to be. What I once represented and how much has changed.

The next part of this will be an interview that would take place of two versions of myself. Inspired a bit by the movie *Everything, Everywhere, All At Once* this fictionalized interview explores Student Jalees who I am currently with my writing studies knowledge as a scholar and Dr. Jalees is a path I could of taken had I not fallen down the writing studies rabbit hole. The ways I used to think about language and the toxic lessons I had reinforced not only in my own writing but others as well.

Her sharp tongue and red pen:

The room still feels like the air hasn't been circulated out in awhile. Interview after interviews on the brown desk and the last minute clacking of keys on a laptop. Waiting for each participant to come and share their experiences. The bookshelf is lined with different pedagogies, theories, and literature. Each one with a new lesson to be learned. This participant might be the worst only because I know her ideals and beliefs are a hard stance. Difficult to stand by and get her to consider a new perspective. Maybe something new can be learned, I mean no one ever stops learning right? The door creaks open there she appears with her warm inviting smile and takes a seat.

Student Jalees: Hi Doctor Tamayo, I am so happy that you decided to come in for this interview! How are you doing?

Dr. Jalees: I'm doing good thank you for having me!

J: I'm glad you're here. Go ahead and take a seat and we can get straight to it. Now that I've read through the informed consent, are you ready to start the interview recording?

Dr: Yes, I am ready to start.

J: So the first question that I have for you have you heard of code meshing before today and in what contexts?

Dr: "I have heard of code meshing before today. I was taught it in a class once but I found it a very difficult to follow along, although I understand the ways that it is helpful to others. It's just not applicable in the real world and when students get to their college courses, graduate school, or law school. It won't be encouraged. I know that codemeshing is the blend of different languages or dialects that can be seen in writing. I am familiar with it being in *Borderlands* and

“Should writers use they own English.” I would define multimodality as using different forms of media to create a project.” Professor Tamayo speaks confidently

J: Do you see value in multimodality projects or value in your students completing one?

Dr: “I know many other professors and my colleagues have been more accepting of multimodal projects to replace essays and finals. It’s great that they do that and obviously they are going to be using what works the best for them and their objectives and skills they want their students to learn at the end of the day. However, for me I can see some value in multimodal projects, Unfortunately, I can never see it replacing an essay. When I do an introduction on a very low stakes assignment I like giving students the choice to record their answer or a video about themselves. It helps them open up a lot better.”

J: “Thank you. I’m curious about your language—what do you mean about students opening up a lot better?”

Dr: I think students are able to show more about their cultural and linguistic identity from where they come from and kind of connect with their peers better.

J: Do you find that to be important in academia?

Dr: In my experience, I never had the chance to connect with my peers culturally or linguistically. Most of it is due to the fact that my classmates didn’t look like me or share my cultural or linguistic identity. It is important to have in academia so I have created classes that are able to show more of my cultural identity and the ways they aren’t properly represented in academia. I love to include Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga in my lessons plans and develop course materials with them in mind. I often find students are able to resonate with themselves in authorship.

J: Thank you. Here's our next question: Have you ever accepted an essay that isn't written in standard academic English? Why would you or wouldn't you do it?"

Dr: "I have never accepted an essay that isn't typical of academic language. The reason why I wouldn't do this is because students have to learn that there is a traditional way of writing once you get to graduate school or even the workplace. I do this to protect students from the pain they can go through. The thing is we can take back English. As long as we perfect this language we can use this to critique English—take the tool and use it against the master. It's crucial that we teach our students writing skills that they will use out in the real world."

J: That reminds of when Audre Lorde said Quote "Audre Lorde" "masters tools can't rebuild the master's house." But as Vershawn Young (2010) argues, "Even folks with good jobs in the corporate world dont follow no standard English" (p. 111). Have you ever heard these arguments against standard English?

Dr: I have heard this argument many times. I have been pushed back on this by many of my colleagues. I understand the value in adding cultural diversity in a class but maybe linguistic diversity isn't as valuable. I, myself don't identify as white but there's also a time and place for linguistic diversity and my classroom just isn't for that place.

J: You know Young (2010) argues, "teachin one correct way lend a hand to choppin off folks' tongues" (p. 111). Young (2010) is leading into what you mentioned before about the importance of having cultural diversity within your classes. So if we don't allow students to express themselves, their identities aren't welcomed.

Dr: I'll take that into consideration for future classes.

J: Thank you, so let's switch gears a bit here and move into multimodality. Have you ever presented information in a multimodal project? So maybe through lectures or powerpoints at conferences?

Dr: "I have presented information in a multimodal project through lectures and powerpoints at conferences. I do this because it is a lot easier to condense down this information and that way students do not have to sit through so much reading material throughout it. I do the powerpoints at conferences again just to condense down this information. Nobody wants to read 40 pages of my research right then and there."

J: What kind of language did you use through it?

Dr: "In conference presentations I am bit more loose with my language. I like to ease up the crowd and let them know that not everything is very serious. I like to make a couple of jokes, or preface by saying something is a bit goofy. It feels good to humanize everything a bit more. During lecture, I find myself becoming more comfortable and sociable with my language. It helps to break things down to students so they understand and don't feel so bad about it.

J: Do you write purely for other literary latinxs in Higher Ed? Or for more white audiences? If it's for more wider audiences is it accessible?

Dr: No, I'm writing for other literary Latinxs in Higher Ed. As my work deals with cultural identity, I design classes around this identity as well. So for that audience I am able to deal with the cultural identity that is often erased within academia at least in my experience.

"Next questions: In what ways did your identity show up in those places?"

I supposed my identity showed up when I am making certain jokes. I make references back to my own language or my culture that I grew up with or the time period that I grew up and what this was like for me back when I was still learning. I also see my identity that is cultural show up

in the lectures that I do for my classes and the ways that I teach about my Mexican heritage within it. Especially when I teach *Borderlands/la frontera*

J: Thank you, I really like how you mention the references to going back to how your cultural identity shows up in your lectures for certain classes that you teach here. So to move on what was the effects on your language confidence throughout the conferences and lectures?

Dr: “My language confidence felt good, there was a lot less emphasis on being perfect and perfecting language. I felt like I could show more of linguistic identity. But again this is just going to students or to people at conference in that moment. As it is like a conversation that I tend to have with the audience or other scholars. I still have to hold myself up to a standard so I can’t be too unprofessional. There’s a limit that I make sure to never cross.

J: “Yeah, I can see that, especially with the conferences and presentations you give, why there is a need to make sure that you can feel more like yourself to your projects. While still maintaining that level of professionalism.”

Dr: “Yeah it definitely can be a tricky balance, but the more I have gotten further in my academic career the better that I have gotten on being able to maintain this balance within our work. Definitely I do feel a lot better within my language and humor within academia”

As I wrote this interview, I decided to push back against the ideals that I once held about academia as a whole. What I could have become like I mentioned earlier, had I not thought further about who I was as a person. I’ve grown from then, and if I had stayed I know I would of made upheld toxic standards about writing. Forced my own students to repeat the traumatic experiences of writing feedback. I’m a big advocate for liberation but how could I say that I truly

apart of that when I was holding linguistic biases and telling students they needed to uphold the same toxic standards in the placement of they need to be professional and formal because that was the real world. But the real world don't have all these damn rules.

“Going where I don’t belong”

My mom and grandma dropped me off at the airport. I took my bags out of the trunk and I gave my mom a hug. I wanted to cry, I felt emotional because at this age my mom was at home pregnant with me. Confined to taking care of one kid and a husband at the ripe age of 21 and here I was with suitcases ready to leave for Baltimore to present my own research. I didn’t let myself cry because I needed to be strong. But I knew in that moment something broke, something was set free, and I can only hope that I had changed a path for the women in my family. So, I sat on the plane right next to my friends who made all the anxiety fade away.

“Have a safe trip! And Enjoy yourself. Just remember how white these spaces generally are. Your center is the expectation, not the rule If you need to tantrum, you know how to find me. And You’re going to crush it 💖” - Bri

Stepping out on a plane and traveling the 4 hours and 59 minutes to Baltimore. It all sunk in and I realized that this was all real. I finished my presentation the night before because I was scared and I wanted it to be the very best. I felt lost and still afraid because my partner left me and this project was a proposal I turned in the day of and received feedback on it. I came into this conference with a partner because I truly believed I needed someone who was “smarter” and who had more “experience” than me. By the time proposals were due I had no partner, just work I did all by myself that was crafted from his idea. The weekend before the night proposals were due I turned in an entirely new proposal and took up a new challenge of creating a website

instead of going ahead with his idea. I did the work all on my own, didn't have much time to think about how good the proposal was, only that I was doing my best. Now I was on a plane and the realization was real and I finally made it. I tried not to think about my presentation too much. I didn't want to freak myself out or have a panic attack. Or even cry at that point either. I realized I was really all on my own and I still wasn't sure if I would really crush it or if I was really as smart. Most of all I was worried that my old partner would think and see that I am not smart. I was worried he would believe I am stupid but I have this underlying motivation and point to prove that I am smart even if he has no way of seeing. Maybe this comes from the men in my lives holding women back if I don't prove it in some way. I feel that I lost the battle. I don't want to lose the battle. I can't give up anymore.

By the time Saturday rolled around. I made sure to get up early as I laid out the professional attire I brought with me. I wanted to make sure I at least looked the part. I did my hair and my makeup. Put on my clothes and my loafers and I know I looked the part. I want to see Rhovi and Amani's presentation first. The weight was crushing me because I knew that my work didn't feel the same or as comparable to anyone else there. Rhovi and Amani crushed it. They did so well but this wasn't their first time that's for sure. Once it ended we left towards my presentation. I sat down at the table. The first presenter went up. They were so amazing and sweet to me and so was the second presenter. They were clearly so ahead of me in research. I looked around the room to see only five people, two who were Rhovi and Amani were a part of the people of color. I started to get nervous, I really missed my mom at that moment. I stared at an empty seat and I imagined her. But no one looked like me; it was all filled with white people. Who I know even at

their most mediocre work were still considered better than me at my very best. Finally it was my turn. I went up and my hands were shaking. I brought up my slide and opened with a joke. I said “I got a question: do the nerves ever go away? Or do you constantly feel like you’re throwing up, shaking, and crying?” and they all laughed and in that moment I let it all go.

I presented and I felt like a natural and I focused on the work. Questions rolled around and not much was to be said but then some questions got brought in and I answered well. I did it but once I was done, we went upstairs to change to go to lunch with Rachel, Rhovi, and Amani. But when I was up there I noticed a housekeeper singing in Spanish. I stopped in my tracks and looked outside and realized the most people of color I saw at the conference. Where the ones who worked at the hotel itself. That feeling never felt so crushing never made me resent the reigns of academia more. All while this housekeeper sang a song in Spanish. I thought of my grandma and I even thought of my mom. All those white people have climbed the ladder all but who has it been at the cost of? For me to politely ask for a seat at the table? Hoping they’ll let me in? Was I this conference token diversity? I wanted to see more people like me and I still do and grad school has only made me more aware of who I want to be. I want to get to a point where the only faces I see aren’t white. Where I can imagine a room of people like me, like my friends, and others in the room. I went where I don’t belong but maybe one day the singing won’t come from a hotel room with cleaning supplies instead it’ll come from them singing in between attending panels.

“*Burning Evil Altars*”

Chapter 7: Examining linguistic biases within academia

There lies a wooden altar filled with candles, papers, pens, photos, and tongues laid out on white dollies, demanding a new tongue under a full moon. Another sacrifice that demands to become one of them. To be accepted in this world that consistently has oppressed my people along with their tongues. Each candle demanding to be lit the knife laid in my shaky hands. Shall I give them my tongue? In hopes of a better life? Will I always be constricted to this Mexican woman who isn't taken seriously? All because I am hesitant to cut this stubborn tongue from my mouth?

This research I endured countless nights of doubting myself. All lead me back down this path of realizing that this work matters. Originally I expressed concerns, I didn't think that my own experience and feelings revolving around multimodality warranted a whole research paper, let alone honors thesis. Like my Robloxians I feared I wouldn't be taken seriously and this research would be defined as “silly” or not important. When this was the furthest from the truth. The only person who was holding me back was myself. I endured all this writing trauma and created it into a project that I am proud of and most of all. My Robloxians showed me that this worked mattered and to them I'll forever be grateful.

The journey isn't over but I learned so much from this experience. My writing confidence was once through the roof I didn't doubt myself before but after last semester I found that multiple comments of bad feedback changed my confidence. I was back where I once began,

paralyzed in my own writing. Unsure if I was fit to be a writer and questioning if I had what it took to actually be a great writer. I felt wounded like every wound that had be healed tore itself back open. As if it all screamed you aren't one of us. The feedback I received was from a place of good intentions. I understand wanted to save me from the rigorous programs graduate school will one day provide, and I had the potential. It's an argument I know professors will constantly use for me. But I don't need saving not to conform me back to White Mainstream English.

I needed to break away from white people talk! I needed my tongue to be saved! I needed another professor to nurture my linguistic agency and help me fight this oppressive system! So all the imposter syndrome came back to me. But my Robloxians saved me, after each interview they restored my faith in this project. Each Robloxians placed the emphasis that this work mattered even if they didn't know it. They grabbed my hand after all this time, placed this importance on why they felt similarly to me. How they felt liberated within their multimodal projects and how they saw the representation that wasn't typically represented in academia.

All of this to say? What can instructors and professors do? How can we support linguistic agency through multimodality? First, we need to hunker down and start giving professional development in order to teach students about codemeshing and multimodality. We also have to give students the trust to be graded without the fear of being reprimanded and encourage students through each part of their journey. Allow these students to codemesh! Teach them the importance of multimodality and how it can apply to different careers because at the end of the day not everyone is going to end up in academia writing paper after paper. Finally, have faith in your students and yourself. This is a long journey, not easy, and can be a difficult fight to stand for linguistic agency for students but I believe it will all be worth it at the end of the day.

My wooden altar its stained oak caked with blood. The smell of burning flesh and the knife that taunts me day after day. Oh my altar, I don't say a prayer for you no more. My knees don't buckle under dirt and engrain my knees with the marks of little rocks until I bleed. My tongue isn't scared of you no more. I'm not scared of what they had to offer you. Take this sackcloth I refuse to grieve what you have taken from me. You won't get to keep this tongue. As I watch you finally burn for good leaving nothing but your ash.

References

- Anzaldúa, G. (1987). "How to tame a wild tongue. In C. H. Talusan (Ed.), *"Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza"* (pp. 53-64). Aunt Lute Books.
- Adler-Kassner, L., & Wardle, E. (Eds.). (2010). *"Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts of Writing Studies."* Utah State University Press.
- CCCC statement on White language supremacy. Conference on College Composition and Communication. (2021, November 11).
- Clements, G., Petray, M. J., & ProQuest. (2021). *Linguistic discrimination in U.S. higher education : power, prejudice, impacts, and remedies*. Routledge.
- Davidson, S. (Ed.). (2020). *"Trauma-Informed Practices for Postsecondary Education: A Guide."* Education Northwest.
- Dutro, E. (2011). *Writing Wounded: Trauma, Testimony, and Critical Witness in Literacy Classrooms*. English Education, 43(2), 193–211. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23017070>
- Freire, P., Ramos, M. B., & Macedo, D. (2014). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (Thirtieth anniversary edition..). Bloomsbury.
- Kwan, Daniel and Daniel Scheinert, directors. *Everything Everywhere All at Once*. Eagle Pictures, 2023.

Mayers, T. (2009). *One Simple Word: From Creative Writing to Creative Writing Studies*.

College English, 71(3), 217–228. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25472320>

Molloy, C. (2016). *Multimodal Composing as Healing: Toward a New Model for Writing as Healing Courses*. Composition Studies, 44(2), 134–152.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/24859533>

Nevada State. (n.d.). Enrollment by Nevada State. Public.tableau.com.

https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/nevada.state/viz/Enrollment_16747552932370/Enrollment

Shapiro, S., & Taylor & Francis. (2022). *Cultivating critical language awareness in the writing classroom*. Routledge.

Tayles, Melissa. “Trauma-Informed Writing Pedagogy: Ways to Support Student Writers Affected by Trauma and Traumatic Stress.” Teaching English in the Two-Year College, vol. 48, no. 3, 2021, pp. 295–313.

Young, V. A. (2010). *Should writers use they own English?* Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies, 12(1), 110–118. <https://doi.org/10.17077/2168-569x.1095>.