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INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGIES IN ITALIAN STUDIES: USING SOCIOLINGUISTIC DATA TO DECOLONISE THE CURRICULUM

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Sommario
Quando gli studenti frequentano i corsi di italianistica, si aspettano di conoscere i contributi culturali e linguistici degli europei bianchi. I libri di testo e il canone letterario rafforzano questo approccio. Tuttavia, sia nel passato che nel presente, la comprensione del concetto di razza in Italia e nella diaspora italiana è molto più complessa e connessa a contesti specifici. Con il recente aumento delle migrazioni in Italia, la natura dell'identità italiana e chi può rivendicare l'italianità per se stesso sono diventati oggetti di forte dibattito nella sfera pubblica. Un modo per gli studenti di pensare criticamente all'interno degli studi d'italianistica è quello di conoscere le esperienze vissute dagli abitanti italiani emarginati e minoritari. In un passo importante verso la decolonizzazione del curriculum, alcuni docenti hanno iniziato ad includere opere letterarie di autori italiani afrodiscendenti come Pap Khouma e Igiaba Scego. Tuttavia, approcci diversi al di là degli studi letterari possono mostrare punti di studio diversi. Basandosi sulla ricerca sociolinguistica ed etnografica analizzata in Senegal Abroad (2019), questo articolo analizza come i migranti senegalesi a Roma concettualizzino il loro ruolo nella società italiana attraverso le loro riflessioni sull'apprendimento della lingua e sull'appartenenza culturale. Impegnandosi in questo tipo di dati in interviste, gli studenti di italiano possono partecipare ad un'esperienza di classe più diversificata, equa e inclusiva.

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When students take courses in Italian studies, they often expect to learn about the cultural and linguistic contributions of white Europeans. While discourses around national identity influence this perception, Italian studies is equally responsible for this narrow-minded view. As

Deborah Parker argues in her seminal essay 'Race and Foreign Language', Italian studies suffers from a lack of diversity among its members and trails other Romance language disciplines with regards to inclusivity: "The field has been insular for decades, and a patronage culture prevails. Many Italian programs strive for 'authenticity' by favouring native Italians" (Parker, 2018: para. 9). In her private response to Parker, Catherine Adoyo elaborates, "I sincerely believe that the lack of diversity in disciplines like Italian is only just a symptom of a much deeper problem; the provincial attitude that Italian literature is *about* Italians with the corollary that it is *for* Italian readers, Italian scholars, Italian thinkers, Italian people and them alone" (Parker, 2021:161). Italian curricula and language learning textbooks reinforce this image, and while there has not been a systematic exploration of Italian pedagogical materials, Anthony Tamburri (2021:iii) affirms that the lack of diversity regarding "issues of race and ethnicity within the field of Italian studies are very much tied to a canonical notion of literature, a dominant cultural thought process that dictates for the reader how a novel might be constructed and what themes it should, or should not, include". Therefore, students engage primarily with this canon – texts by white men (e.g., Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio) who have been deemed the greats of Italian literature and whose contributions form the basis of an Italian identity formation that presupposes whiteness.

However, both historically and in the present day, understandings of race in Italy and the Italian diaspora are much more complex than many realise. The existence of the Southern Question – a phenomenon in which southern Italians have been considered culturally inferior to northerners and have been described as more African than Italian – means that since 19th century nation-building, Italians have sought to distinguish themselves from anything that suggests Blackness. Furthermore, while Black Africans have been in Italy for centuries (e.g., enslaved Africans landing in Italy because of Florence's role in the slave trade; prominent people in Italy's history, such as Alessandro de' Medici, who would be considered Black by today's standards), this historical Black presence has remained largely unknown. Recent migrations to Italy have been more successful in igniting highly contested public discussions about the nature of Italian identity and who can claim Italianness or *Italianità*. Relatedly, as the global fight against

systemic racism proliferates, the correlation between whiteness and Italianness has been increasingly interrogated. As educators, we must ask ourselves the following question: how do we respond not only to this new focus on diversity in Italy but also to the increasing awareness among scholars from various fields that we must decolonise our Italian studies curricula?

While decolonising the curriculum has become a buzz phrase in the current climate, it is important to specify exactly what it means. Keele University's manifesto on the subject cogently articulates the key points, which include recognising that no one owns knowledge and that "knowledge is inevitably marked by power relations" (Keele University, 2018). Furthermore, the manifesto enunciates several steps to truly achieve decolonisation, including but not limited to "rethinking, reframing and reconstructing the current curriculum in order to make it better, and more inclusive"; not just "bringing in minority ethnic writers and texts" but also reconsidering "how we read 'traditional mainstream' texts"; "identifying ways in which the university structurally reproduces colonial hierarchies" and providing alternatives and "creating spaces and resources for a dialogue among all members of the university on how to imagine and envision all cultures and knowledge systems in the curriculum" (Keele University, 2018).

The edited volume *Decolonizing Foreign Language Education* (Macedo & DeGraff, 2019) takes these principles and distils them through the lens of foreign language education. Donaldo Macedo's chapter asks us to question "dominant colonial standard languages and the old assumptions about their inherent superiority" (46). Claire Kramsch then argues for a "dialogue with speakers from other educational cultures *on their own terms*, and the willingness to enter the slow and difficult process of linguistic and cultural translation" (69). Meanwhile, Ofelia García explores how, both historically and in the present day, "powerful elites have imposed a way of using language that is constrained by artificial conventions and that reflects their own language practices" (152). Connecting language to the idea of the nation, she adds, "Nation-states have co-opted the human potential of language as a meaning-making semiotic tool, relegating many speakers to a position of speechlessness" (152). She champions the notion of translanguaging pedagogy, a social justice tool that privileges "the fluid language practices of multilingual communities" to "liberate sign

systems that have been constrained by socio-political domination, attempting to give voice to all and redress power differentials among speakers" (163).

The edited volume *Diversity in Italian Studies* (Gibby & Tamburri, 2021) offers various pedagogical approaches to addressing Italian studies's lack of curricular diversity and its need to decolonise its curricula. For instance, Vetri Nathan relies on the Italian canon but asks students to engage with these texts critically "in order to gain a deeper insight into how literary and cinematic representation in itself poses many problematic questions about identity and power" (151). Deanna Shemek suggests "making visible the topics and players already present" in canonical texts in addition to adding texts from non-white authors outside the canon, such as Pap Khouma or Amara Lakhous (173). Meanwhile, Alessia Valfredini highlights the limits of textbooks by supplementing them with "a variety of voices that reflect a complex and multifaceted view of Italy" (179). She goes beyond literary texts to include song lyrics, newspaper articles, dialogue from movies, commercials and other types of texts (184).

In this article, I build on these pedagogical suggestions to show how interviews with minoritised and marginalised inhabitants in Italy provide students a complementary way to think critically about Italian studies. I have found that sociolinguistic, ethnographic research such as the data in my book, *Senegal Abroad* (2019), is a productive archive for students to analyse. Through this work, they uncover how members of the Senegalese diaspora conceptualise where they fit in *Italianità* through their reflections on language learning and cultural belonging. Taking a sociolinguistic approach to decolonising and diversifying Italian studies is important because (1) the student body at most universities is becoming more racially, ethnically, socio-economically and linguistically diverse; (2) students are constantly grappling with their own experiences as language learners and linguistic beings and (3) language is something that intersects with various other identity markers, a reality that people from minoritised and marginalised groups, such as those in my research, experience quite acutely.

With regards to diversity within the USA, 40% of the US population now identify as people of colour, and 20% of the population speak a language other than English at home. In higher education, students of colour make up over 45% of the student body. Furthermore, over 5% of

university students are foreign nationals, most coming from non-English-speaking countries. With these demographics in mind, Shemek (2019:170) rightly asks, "For what student population should Italian studies courses be designed?" Her answer is spot on:

> Just as students of European extraction are boosting enrollments in Arabic and Japanese, Italian should be seeking to attract students of Hispanic, Asian, African, and other backgrounds. Our task, as I see it, is to join this exciting and complex conversation, bringing Italian studies into a broader world picture and embracing the fact that Italy itself has become an increasingly multiethnic culture. (170)

If students enrolling in our courses look less and less like the historical, stereotypical representation of an Italian studies student, how will they be received in the classroom and in Italian society? Ryuko Kubota (2009) contends that linguistic legitimacy goes beyond the ability to speak a language. It is "determined by a discourse that produces a certain linguistic and racialized profile as legitimate or illegitimate speakers" (236). Similarly, Christina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo (2012:10) show the false relationship between linguistic competence and societal acceptance in Italy: "Italianità seems unattainable for [B]lack Italians precisely because national belonging is generally understood in terms of specific traits (both cultural and biological) that cannot be simply acquired by a perfect mastery of the language and the Italian way of life". In other words, skin colour and other racialised markers impose restrictions on Black Italians' claim to *Italianità* even when they possess Italian language abilities.

This othering is exactly the experience of many scholars of colour in Italian studies as evidenced by Parker's (2018 & 2021) essays, where the 40 or so professors and graduate students she interviewed detail alienation and exclusion simply because they are not white. Those in power often weaponise language as an otherising force. For instance, Parker (2021:160) laments the language tests that 'peninsular Italianists' often put minority scholars through: "Many people speak a foreign language with an accent; virtually all make occasional grammar mistakes. But this phenomenon can become a way of testing a

minority's or non-native speaker's bonafides [...]. *What* we say should prevail over *how* we say it".

If this sort of linguistic discrimination exists among scholars in the field, what does this mean for the students in our classrooms and in study abroad programs? In a heartbreaking reflection on her experience as a doctoral student in Italian studies, Kenyse Lyons (2021) recalls the onslaught of injustices she suffered (e.g., exoticised as *la perla nera* [black pearl], belittled by professors, excluded by fellow students, barred entry to the library by white guards). However, the incident that has caused the most harm is an experience tied to language: "The most destructive stereotype I encountered during my studies showed up in the form of a trusted professor's claim – unsupported by any textual analysis of my writing – that language would be my 'Achilles heel'" (137).

Because of her experiences, she is deeply attuned to what her own students might encounter in their studies and provides strategies to cope with the 'race-based stress' that is embedded in our institutions. For instance, among other suggestions, she implores those in power to accept "students' historical realities, lived experiences, and the perspectives they give rise to"; encourages students to "actively seek out those aspects of the discipline where their social identity is included" and entreats them to "advocate on behalf of themselves and others for more culturally responsive practices of student/scholar engagement" (2021:144-145).

These suggestions are central to the pedagogical model that I advance in this essay. Our students, especially those from international or immigrant backgrounds, may struggle with their multilingual and multicultural identities when our pedagogical practices treat their abilities as hindrances instead of as assets. How can we expand our pedagogy to centre multilingualism and multiculturalism? What happens when we present nonliterary texts by non-white people to our diverse classrooms? What happens when texts in the target language are not just by monolingual native speakers? As Kramsch and Anne Whiteside (2008:664) argue,

> Social actors in multilingual settings seem to activate more than a communicative competence that would enable them to communicate accurately, effectively, and appropriately

> with one another. They seem to display a particularly acute ability to play with various linguistic codes and with the various spatial and temporal resonances of these codes. We call this competence 'symbolic competence'.

Therefore, if we give students the tools to invest in their language learning identities and to build on the linguistic and cultural capital they already bring to the classroom, they will be better prepared to navigate the culturally and linguistically diverse environments in which they will undoubtedly find themselves in life. Multilingual, sociolinguistic texts not only expand students' understanding of their abilities as multilingual beings but also redefine identities such as those associated with notion of *Italianità*.

Using sociolinguistic, multilingual texts in the Italian studies classroom

The following transcribed texts of interview data can be used in a wide range of classes in either the target language or English, from beginning Italian language classes to upper division content courses in Italian studies. Instructors can help students analyse these authentic texts for linguistic phenomena and/or read them as cultural reflections on lived experiences in Italy and the diaspora. I have presented them in colleagues' courses when guest lecturing and in invited talks at various universities. Student discussions of these texts have always been engaging and enlightening. While most of the excerpts I present are from data I collected in Rome, I also include conversations that took place in Paris and New York, because it is important for students to see that Senegalese migrants use Italian outside of Italy.

I introduce the texts by first talking a bit about the linguistic situation in Senegal and the migration pathways that those in my study took to get to Paris, Rome and New York. Senegal is officially French speaking but is also proudly multilingual with over 17 recognised national languages. Senegal also has a robust migratory tradition. Many Senegalese migrated to France during French colonial rule and continued to do so after gaining independence in 1960. However, French migration restrictions in the 1970s and 1980s redirected migration flows to Italy and the USA. Currently, there are about 90,000

Senegalese in France, 110,000 in Italy and 20,000 in the USA. The following examples are the types of texts that student analyse when thinking about Senegalese reflections on Italian and *italianità*.

'Je suis nero, je suis brutto, ma je suis vivo'

When decolonising Italian curricula, we should centre race in our discussions for multiple reasons. First, non-white members of Italian society are racialised in their daily lives. If we want to produce an ample and accurate portrait of life in Italy, these experiences should be included. Second, our students come from diverse backgrounds and could experience this racialisation if they get the chance to study or travel in Italy. Third, all students, regardless of their racial background or their opportunities to travel abroad, should be exposed to how racialisation works in various contexts. Teaching about race in Italy can open the conversation to comparisons with the USA.

It is important to help students theorise what race is and why it exists. I often begin any unit that discusses race with a lecture either in English or in the target language. For general theorisation, I bring in Omi and Winant's (2015:109) work on racial formation: "the sociohistorical process by which racial identities are created, lived out, transformed, and destroyed". While dominant understandings of race tend to suggest that race is either a biological fact or an illusion, Omi and Winant argue that race is a social construct with very real consequences both in how it is embedded in macro-level social structures and in how it plays out at the micro-level in everyday interactions between people. People become racialised, that is, they are seen as belonging to a certain race and treated a certain way based on this race. This racialisation does not happen in a vacuum but is built on a historical legacy. We therefore make sense of the world through a racial lens.

I then share sociolinguistic data to illustrate how a person might experience racialisation. For instance, I introduce students to two Senegalese men in their 40s, Ndiaga and his friend who goes by the nickname Professore, whom I interviewed in Rome and whose reflections are found in *Senegal Abroad*. They both discuss how they did not think about being Black when they lived in Senegal. It is in Italy that their Blackness has become an issue.

In the following excerpt, Ndiaga and Professore quote a work of African-American fiction to articulate the racial exclusion they experience in Italian society:

> Professore: La demande, c'était?
> Interviewer: Tes pensées sur l'Italie?
> Professore: **Vabbèh** –
> Ndiaga: – Tu as, tu as [*trails off*]
> Professore: Les –
> Ndiaga: Tu as vu, vu le film Co, Col, Color *Viola*.
> Interviewer: Non. Oh, The Color Purple.
> Ndiaga: Color *Viola*.
> Interviewer: The Color, oui.
> Ndiaga: Tu [l'as vu]?
> Professore: Color Purple.
> Interviewer: Oui. Oui. C'est, c'est fort.
> Ndiaga: Je suis noir – je suis *nero*, je suis *brutto*, ma, je suis *vivo*!
> Interviewer: *Esatto*.
> Ndiaga: *È bellissimo*[1].

This short text is a gold mine for student analysis. I first ask students to consider the message Professore and Ndiaga convey through their conversation. Students pick up on the racial dimensions right away. I then have them ruminate on the rhetorical and linguistic features that Professore and Ndiaga use to make their point. Students usually first

[1] Professore: The question, it was?
Interviewer: Your thoughts about Italy.
Professore: **OK** –
Ndiaga: – Have you, have you [*trails off*]
Professore: The –
Ndiaga: Have you seen, seen the film Co, Col, Color *Purple*?
Interviewer: No. Oh, The Color Purple.
Ndiaga: Color *Purple*.
Interviewer: The Color, Yes.
Ndiaga: You [saw it]?
Professore: Color Purple.
Interviewer: Yes. Yes. It's, it's powerful.
Ndiaga: I am black – I am *black*, I am *ugly*, but, I am *alive*!
Interviewer: *Exactly*.
Ndiaga: *It is beautiful*.

note the quoting of *The Color Purple*. I then give background information on Alice Walker's novel and the film adaptation by Steven Spielberg before sharing the original quote that the battered Celie says to her abuser Albert: "I'm poor, black, I might even be ugly, but dear God, I'm here! I'm here!" As a class, we think about why Ndiaga chooses these words to sum up his experience in Italy. What does it mean to voice an African-American female character in a story full of racialised and gendered violence? We talk about how Ndiaga and Professore embody the emotions expressed by this fictional character and how her words evoke not only struggle but also defiance and agency. I also highlight for them the transnational dimensions of this exchange where the African-American experience in *The Color Purple* sheds light on Black identity formation an ocean away. Furthermore, by cutting off and speaking over each other as well as amplifying the other's words through repetition, Ndiaga and Professore co-construct this racialised narrative.

However, the multilingual aspect of this exchange also contributes to this understanding of race. I draw students' attention to the strategic code-switching that Ndiaga performs. Why does he keep the 'I am' in French but switch to Italian in describing himself as *nero*, *brutto* and *vivo*? I then explain to them the concept of metaphorical code-switching, where, according to Blom and Gumperz (1972:408), switching between languages "enriches a situation, allowing for allusion to more than one social relationship within the situation". Students often note that the switching between the French and Italian could signify a linguistic divide that conveys a feeling of societal exclusion. They may also see Ndiaga as making claims to an Italian identity in his use of Italian adjectives to describe himself. Because there are many ways to read what multilingualism does in this passage, students can be simultaneously creative and analytical in approaching the text.

'Ho tornato italiano adesso'

While race should be highlighted in a decolonising the curriculum approach to pedagogy, decolonisation must bring in other markers of diversity, such as multilingualism and national identity. My interviewees take great pride in their mobility and their multilingual

repertoires, extolling the virtues of being able to cross geographic and linguistic borders. Furthermore, they celebrate more than just being able to speak many languages. I therefore like to draw students' attention to ways in which language learners enjoy the different identities they acquire because of these languages.

For instance, during a tantalising conversation at a Senegalese restaurant in Rome, various Senegalese patrons negotiate national identities in a manner that plays on words and languages in a creative way. Here, Idi (I), a friend (F) and Bachir (B) joke about being Italian:

Idi:	Non mi piacciono i senegalesi, e per questo io ho tornato italiano adesso. Capito? [*everyone laughs*] I senegalesi parlano troppo, capito. Hai visto questo?
Friend:	Chi è italiano? Sei italiano?
Idi:	Sì.
Friend:	Meno male. Boy, *yow yaa doon naan fii*?
Idi:	Non è male che cosa?
Friend:	Perche sei italiano adesso. Noi siamo dei senegalesi, capito?
Bachir:	**Je suis fier d'être sénégalais**.
Friend:	*Wax ko si italien*.
Idi:	Ecco, io, grazie a tutti –
Friend:	*Jox ko si ndox mi mu naan si* **italien**.
Idi:	*Bokkul si* **italien**.
Friend:	*Waaye benn la*.
Idi:	*Asstaf four la*[2].

[2] Idi: I don't like the Senegalese and therefore I've become Italian now. Understood? [*everyone laughs*] The Senegalese talk too much. Understood? You've seen this?
Friend: Who's Italian? You are Italian?
Idi: Yes.
Friend: Thank goodness. Boy, *wasn't it you who was drinking here*?
Idi: What thing isn't bad?
Friend: Because you are Italian now. We are Senegalese, understood?
Bachir: **I am proud to be Senegalese.**
Friend: *Say it in Italian*.
Idi: Listen, I, thanks to everyone –
Friend: *Give him some water so he can drink it in* **Italian**.
Idi: *That is not part of the* **Italian language**.
Friend: *It's the same thing*.

I ask students why in an environment like the Senegalese restaurant where Wolof is predominantly spoken, Idi would speak in Italian to voice his decision to give up his Senegalese identity. I then have students brainstorm the ways in which those in the conversation conceptualise what identity is. Students note the humour displayed in suggesting that everyday activities such as drinking water can be done in Italian. They also remark that Idi is making claims on *Italianità*. In addition, we interrogate the 'us' versus 'them' framework where *noi* (we) represents the Senegalese who did not defect and 'them' represents Idi, who is now Italian. I then ask students to think about why Bachir would express his Senegalese identity in French by saying he is proud to be Senegalese when I explain how in other parts of his interview, he speaks about the colonising nature of French. For students, it is important to see how people negotiate identity through the use of multiple languages and through playful humour.

I also point out that a person does not have to use standard language to communicate effectively. For instance, Idi says 'io ho tornato italiano adesso' (literally, 'I have turned Italian now') to announce to everyone he has become Italian. In standard Italian, one would expect 'sono diventato italiano'. While some may view this as a mistake, it is important to show students that Idi was able to convey meaning through nonstandard usage with no issue. Students are always so worried about committing errors. Reminding them they can still be great communicators even when they veer from standard usage can be a liberating realisation for them.

'Un perfetto uomo che parla tutto'

This final excerpt explores how negotiating *Italianità* does not happen just in Rome. Senegalese in other parts of the diaspora carry their experiences with Italy, Italian and *Italianità* with them as they move throughout the world. For instance, Ousseynou, a 37-year-old taxi driver that I interview in Harlem, New York, and the waiter of the Senegalese-French restaurant where we conduct our interview begin speaking Italian when I ask Ousseynou what his favourite language is.

Idi: *Forgiveness from God. / It's not true*.

This spontaneous use of Italian on US soil shows how Italian can be found anywhere even though students often assume they will hear it only in Italy or in Italian-speaking enclaves. The multilingual usage also demonstrates how easily people can switch between languages:

Ousseynou: Ma *ça fait huit ans* **ma ngi fii leegi**.
Waiter: Ora io sono qui da cinque mesi.
Ousseynou: Cinco mesi? Ah.
Waiter: Cinque mesi che sono qui.
Interviewer: Ah, OK.
Waiter: Però io sono laureato in lingue.
Interviewer: Anch'io.
Waiter: Perciò ho studiato lingue. Inglese, francese, spagnolo, portoghese.
Interviewer: Anch'io!
Waiter: Sì! ...
Ousseynou: Un perfetto uomo che parla tutto ... *Tu as vu hein? Ça c'est les Sénégalais.*
Interviewer: *Oui oui. C'est incroyable.*
Ousseynou: *Les Sénégalais aiment voyager, aiment apprendre des langues. Tu vois?*[3]

Students are always amazed at the fluidity in the use of and movement between languages such as in the line 'Ma *ça fait huit ans* **ma ngi fii leegi**' [But *it's been eight years* **I am here now**] where Ousseynou speaks in Italian, French and Wolof or the question, 'Cinco mesi?' [Five months?], asked in both Italian and Spanish. They also cannot imagine

[3] Ousseynou: But *it's been eight years* **I am here now**.
Waiter: I've been here for five months.
Ousseynou: Five months? Ah.
Waiter: Five months I'm here.
Interviewer: Ah, OK.
Waiter: But I graduated with a degree in languages.
Interviewer: Me too.
Waiter: For that reason I studied languages. English, French, Spanish, Portuguese.
Interviewer: Me too!
Waiter: Yes! ...
Ousseynou: A perfect man who speaks everything ... *You see, eh? That is how Senegalese are*.
Intervoewer: *Yes, yes. It's incredible.*
Ousseynou: *The Senegalese love to travel, love to learn languages. You see?*

a Senegalese waiter suddenly speaking in Italian in a Senegalese-French restaurant in New York just from overhearing a conversation. They appreciate the matter-of-fact way Ousseynou announces that Senegalese love multilingualism with his line 'Un perfetto uomo che parla tutto' [A perfect man who speaks everything] and get a front-row seat to the concept of symbolic competence that Kramsch and Whiteside (2008) have articulated.

After analysing this passage, I ask students to brainstorm all the reasons why being multilingual is important. Communication with a variety of people, navigating foreign environments and job opportunities are some of the responses they share. I then follow up with one last quote from Ousseynou so he can explain in his own words. At one point in our interview, Ousseynou divulges that he wants to learn Spanish because of his job as a taxi driver: "Por me, è muy interesante de hablar muchos *different languages* ... si le client entre dans ma voiture, je dis, '¿Cómo estás? ¿Muy bien?' *They say* '*Ah, OK*, ¡tu hablas español!' Tu vois?" ["For me, it is very interesting to speak many *different languages* ... if the client gets in my car, I say, 'How are you? Very good?' *They say*, '*Ah OK*, you speak Spanish!' You see?"] For Ousseynou, speaking the language of his clients goes beyond utilitarian purposes for his job. It allows him to offer linguistic hospitality by creating an inviting space for them to feel welcome.

Scaffolding student experiences

It may be overwhelming at first for teachers to present multilingual, sociolinguistic texts if they normally use monolingual, literary texts in the classroom. However, because *Senegal Abroad* offers detailed analysis of these excerpts, which include useful background information about the speakers and their experiences, teachers are not flying blind when they ask students to engage with these texts. Additionally, students should be empowered to use their own experiences with multilingualism when they attempt to make sense of these texts. For that reason, I scaffold their engagement with the course texts by having students complete reflexive exercises.

Students often benefit from keeping language journals, either in English or in the target language, where they explore different concepts. For instance, near the beginning of a course term, I may have them

reflect on their linguistic autobiographies by asking the following questions: What languages do you speak? In which contexts? With whom? How have you learned these languages? Through formal instruction, informal conversations or immersion experiences? How confident do you feel using each of your languages in speaking, listening, reading and writing? Do you ever mix languages by switching between them? What are your thoughts of these practices? Depending on how you set up your assignments, you can ask multiple questions at once or have them focus on one or two questions in a series of low-stakes assignments. It is up to you to decide how often and in what format students share their responses. Sometimes I have them submit their writings to me. Other times I ask them to share with each other in small groups or the whole class. Sharing is key because I find it very helpful for students to hear about their classmates' experiences with language.

In addition to these more general questions, I may define a term and prompt them to think about whether they have experienced this phenomenon in their lives. The following are examples of possible discussion prompts:

(1) Ofelia García (2009:140) defines translanguaging as "the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, in order to maximize communicative potential". Describe any instances in your life where you have engaged in translanguaging.

(2) Anne Charity Hudley (2017:383) argues, "Negative messages about language can be experienced as linguistic microaggressions. [...] [A] linguistic microaggression, which tends to be made toward people of color, is the statement 'You talk White' or 'You sound White', although the statement 'You sound Black' (or 'Mexican', 'Indian', etc.) can also sometimes be made. These microaggressions can imply that members of racial or ethnic groups are expected to talk and 'sound' the same, that anyone who does not is deviant and that some cultures are

> not worth identifying with. Furthermore, it can imply that the speaker in question, because of how she or he talks, no longer belongs to or identifies with her or his home culture, which may not be true". Have you ever experienced or witnessed others experience these types of microaggressions? If so, describe your emotions and responses to the microaggressions as well as your relationship to the racial/ethnic/linguistic identities in question. If not, how do you think you would feel and respond?

The first prompt would serve as a primer for a class where students are tasked with analysing any multilingual, sociolinguistic texts. The second prompt would introduce students to concepts they can uncover in sociolinguistic tests describing race and language attitudes. Creating a space where students have the time and tools to reflect on their own linguistic autobiographies helps them make sense of the course texts and make connections to their lived experiences.

Conclusion

A decolonising Italian studies pedagogy must reframe what Italian language education is and recentre who Italian language speakers and students are. To do so, we cannot rely on narrow assumptions about the Italian language, such as that it is spoken only by idealised native speakers in homogeneous, monolingual environments. We cannot put forth stereotypical depictions of Italian speakers or gloss over the immense diversity of Italy and other Italian-speaking settings. We also cannot assume that our students hail from only white, middle-class backgrounds where their only interest in the Italian language is to travel in Italy and be familiar with the Italian canon.

One way to address these issues is to present language and cultural studies students with texts that challenge all the preconceptions they may bring to the classroom. In this chapter, I have offered multilingual, sociolinguistic texts by non-native speakers of Italian who also happen to be Black and Senegalese. I have shown how these speakers use Italian alongside other languages in complex and creative ways and how they make identity claims in doing so. I have also demonstrated

how students can go further than simply analysing these texts. Teachers can pair these activities with reflexive assignments that force students to take stock of their own linguistic, cultural and racial experiences and how these experiences compare with what they are learning from the course texts. We must work hard so that our students never experience the pain and injustices that Lyons endured as a student in Italian studies. We can do so by honouring students' social identities and lived experiences while also empowering them in their journeys as language learners. This push to diversify our materials, make our classrooms more inclusive and relevant and recalibrate what it means to be an educator better serves our multicultural and multilingual student bodies.

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