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From the Field to the *Cancha*: Reimagining (Language) Education as a Collective Endeavor

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Abstract

This paper, bringing together perspectives from education and medicine, foregrounds how gatekeeping practices within (language) education counter the missions of bilingual education at large and dual language bilingual education while contributing to the promotion of systemic oppression. Drawing on Bourdieu's conceptualizations and through unpacked personal and broader structural experiences, we explicate how the field of language education contains systemic gatekeeping via limiting bilingual program access based on disability status or perceived linguistic deficiencies. Through socialization and schooling practices, marginalized individuals internalize and reproduce gatekeeping despite seeking greater access. We propose shifting towards "goalkeeping," emphasizing cross-linguistic coalition-building and collective responsibility. Integrating theories of critical consciousness and identity safety, we surface reasons why (language) educators focused on critical consciousness want the particularly attentive gatekeeping practices in order to create more just educational spaces.

Paty: Yo le digo a Tanya, [...] “cuando tú seas grande y ya doctora, y sigas en este país, y no hay quien te limpie tu casa, y viene una señora, y te habla español, tú le puedes decir las cosas en español. Tú le puedes decir las cosas en español. Que no seas racista,” le digo. “Porque tú eres mexicana. El título de que nada más porque naciste en este país, pero tú vienes de padres mexicanos.” Porque Dan una vez me dijo—bueno varias veces me dijo, “Pero yo no soy mexicano. Yo soy americano.”¹

Note: Paty suena mucho como mami.²

(Cioè-Peña, field memo, Winter 2017)

An anti-racist, anti-ableist language education scholar and a nephrologist walk into a conference room... No, this is not the start of a joke but rather the start of an unlikely kinship. One in which two scholars from divergent fields connected over their desire to shift away from gatekeeping—in education at large, in health care, and in language education programs—towards crosslinguistic, interdisciplinary, interracial, intergenerational coalition building within our fields and beyond. We come together as scholars and community workers with shared positionalities and an affinity and respect for languages (and languaging) not just as capital but as deeply connective social practices. We also share an understanding that, although schools can serve as vehicles for language learning, language use is not contained to formal academic environments. Thus, approaches to language education and research must also be reflective of the expansive, relational, and collective ways languages can be taught, learned, and used. We also both have a unique understanding of how many expectations for learning and engagement—which are often set as the standard—are tied to ableist ideologies and perspectives around what a “normal” body looks, acts, and sounds like, as well as normative ways of engaging in advocacy.

We root our paper in an understanding that access to bilingual education, particularly dual language bilingual education (DLBE), is often decided by policymakers, educators, and administrators using malleable criteria (e.g., academic readiness, learning ability, linguistic capacity) which privileges resource-rich, predominantly White, middle class, English monolingual students and families rather than racialized students and their familial or communal needs and desires. We view DLBE recruitment—along with entrance and exit criteria—as forms of gatekeeping that aim to stratify access while maintaining the hegemonic status quo (Valdes, 1997; Valdez et al., 2016). Although at the onset this appears to be a schooling issue, this kind of gatekeeping greatly limits students’ linguistic dexterity and, as such, their ability to navigate critical social spaces (like hospitals and schools) in the present, and social services (like Medicaid or financial aid) in the future. It is for this reason that, as we imagine new ways of engaging in DLBE, we draw from Patel’s (2014) vision of answerability:

If we are to be other than owners invested in settler colonialism, educational research needs a radical restructuring of its relationship to knowledge. Rather than property, we should

¹ I say to Tanya, [...] “when you are big and a doctor, and you are still in this country, and there is no one to clean your house, and a lady comes, and speaks Spanish to you, you can tell her things in Spanish. You could tell her things in Spanish. Don’t be racist,” I say. “Because you are Mexican. The title that’s just because you were born in this country, but you come from Mexican parents.” Because Dan once said to me—well, several times he said, “But I’m not Mexican. I’m American.”

² Paty sounds a lot like my mom.

see... knowledge about learning, as what we are answerable to. We should see ourselves as stewards... of the productive and generative spaces that allow for finding knowledge. (p. 373)

We view language in the same way that Patel sees knowledge which is as a means to maintain connections not only to what we are answerable to but to whom.

Gatekeeping refers to how individuals, examinations, policies, and procedures serve as the sole entry points for opportunities or resources (Garrido et al., 2011; Hamid et al., 2019). Within healthcare, this may look like having to see your primary care physician before seeing a specialist; in K-12 schooling, it may look like using standardized tests or formal assessments to determine learner placement. Across both fields, gatekeepers hold substantial power, as they determine who is granted access. Historically, the role of gatekeepers has been upheld due to a perceived need to justly allocate scarce resources (Barzilai-Nahon, 2009; Garrido et al., 2011). From an educational perspective, this allocation of scarce resources has historically been—and continues to be—inequitable. Many of the gatekept educational opportunities show substantial disparities with respect to race and ability status, particularly in accessing highly sought after programs: gifted and talented programs, honors/advanced placement programs, DLBE programs, and others. Over the last decade, research has shown that in many cases DLBE programs—which were introduced in order to address educational inequities experienced by racialized, culturally and linguistically diverse learners—have been co-opted and repackaged from a remedial setting for Black and Indigenous learners to an enrichment setting for white, middle-class families (Freire et al., 2021; Gándara, 2021; Valdez et al., 2016).

In the opening passage, we see a quote from Paty where she shares her understanding of multilingualism in the U.S.: an intermediary between classes and communities where one inherently has power over another as decreed by nationality, geography, and language dominance (i.e., English). This perspective is not surprising given that many traditional perceptions of language teaching and learning view language as (a) a tool for maintaining existing power dynamics as reflected in the linguistic practices of enslavers and plantation masters using select named languages to impose power on the enslaved (Wolfram & Torbert, 2004) and (b) a vehicle for attaining or amassing social, cultural, and, particularly, economic capital (da Silva et al., 2007; García, 2011). Both of these perspectives—which situate language as a tool or commodity—are rooted in sustaining or surviving oppressive structures like capitalism and White supremacy. These perspectives continue to undergird and shape the language learning and teaching experiences of millions.

Support and Accountability? We Know Them as Gatekeeping

As I, María, sat at the kitchen table listening as Paty articulated associations regarding language use, professionalism, class, and upward mobility, I was catapulted back to my own childhood when I saw my bilingualism positioned as a commodity for my family, especially for my mother. While my mother could not use English to communicate with social service representatives or school agents, I could, and she had dominion over me. Growing up, I was often made aware by my mother, aunts, uncles, teachers, and other adults of this gift that I had: my bilingualism. I was also often reminded that this gift was, first and foremost, to be used in service of my family.

Bilingualism was a gift I could share with my family; it was a tangible way to support our collective attainment of the “American dream.”

I remember vividly the events that led to my perceptions of bilingualism shifting from gift to curse. I was a first-year college student at SUNY Cortland, a state university in upstate New York, and was home in NYC for the first time for winter break. I was home a few days, and my mother had filled those days with family-oriented tasks that required “translation services.” This is a familiar task to any young multilingual child with immigrant parents. However, having gone off to college, I expected my younger sister, Hilary, to take on this role. She had been removed from bilingual education on account of her “learning needs,” yet continued to be raised in a Spanish-monolingual household and Spanish-dominant community. She spoke English and Spanish. To me, she was bilingual too. Having returned home to a laundry list of activities, I blurted out “¿Y que hace Hilariza?!” to which my mother mockingly replied, “¿Hilariza? Esa muchacha apenas habla español. Ella no sirve para eso.” In that moment I did not consider the ways in which language practices had been manipulated by school agents through program placements. Nor how those manipulations impacted my mother, my sister, and myself. I did not think about the lack of interpreters and translators available at social services centers. Nor did I consider how ableism, combined with the model minority myth, was creating hierarchies within my own family.

No. In that moment, I hated being bilingual because being bilingual meant I had a “family job” while my sister, as a monolingual, got to be a kid—and I resented her for it. None of this was her fault, nor mine, but perceptions of “bilingualism as a commodity” would shape our relationship for years to come. Beyond reinforcing the power and privilege of English, here is another, and not oft considered, way in which language is positioned as a tool of division. Lacking critical consciousness, I was unable to understand my bilingualism as a means to share and distribute knowledge. I was unable to appreciate it as a form of answerability.

When bilingualism is foregrounded as a commodity, like any form of capital, it too can be experienced as a burden. On the one hand, bilingualism is positioned as financially beneficial. On the other, being bilingual, as opposed to an English-speaking monolingual, often results in the extension and/or magnification of other forms of bias (e.g., ableism, racism, nationalism, xenophobia). This is known. However, what is foregrounded in Paty’s vignette and in María’s retelling are the ways in which these burdens and biases are experienced not solely within institutions but also at the familial and interpersonal level. These are the insidious ways that gatekeeping functions: (1) limiting access where a few members of the community are identified as “worthy” and subsequently, (2) through stratification where some are deemed as more “capable” or “responsible” which leads to (3) internal conflicts and feelings of resentments by juxtaposing the needs/gains of the collective with the skills/capital of the individual. Continuing to position language as an individual commodity roots languaging in colonial conceptions of practices as individual property with owners and regulators rather than communal and connective tools and ways of being meant to sustain the collective. Language, like knowledge, is too often positioned as property that should be accumulated rather than positioning language teachers and learners as “stewards” with the capacity to share knowledge and connect stakeholders (Patel, 2014, p. 373).

* * *

There are powerful keepers guarding the gates of medicine. Those gatekeepers tend to see liability and risk in my identities. They believe gatekeeping protects society. But the people who I am answerable to as a kidney doctor seem to care most about having their humanity upheld. I am a Black bipolar physician. I learned Spanish as a second language, and I am certified to provide

medical care in Spanish. My “fitness” to practice medicine has been formally investigated simply because I have active bipolar disorder. As the fitness assessment—a process involving lawyers, psychiatrists, and drug tests—will attest, I never had issues with performance or professionalism. I was sent to the gates of judgement simply because I have a stigmatized mental illness. Even after intense scrutiny, no one could show I was a worse doctor because I was bipolar. I know the real truth; I am a better physician precisely because of an identity that the gatekeepers would rather keep out.

I work as a kidney doctor in a county hospital which serves many minoritized and marginalized patients. One morning, my first patient was a Black man with kidney disease. His chart was littered with comments which portrayed him as combative, which is language I now know to be code for “Black.” As we began to talk about his kidney disease, he asked me if smoking marijuana laced with stimulants could be the cause of his kidney problems. They likely were, I told him. Within minutes, he began to pour out intimate details of his life to me in a way which made our mutual Blackness palpable: he eventually shared that he smoked because he felt very lonely and was struggling with his mental health. “But I would never see a psychiatrist or therapist,” he said.

A few moments later, I asked him why he’d never see a mental health doctor.

“Ya know, I don’t know,” he shrugged. I interpreted that as mental health providers weren’t for people like us.

“I see a therapist,” I shared. His eyes widened. Within a few seconds he agreed to give therapy a try.

The second patient was a Latinx gentleman with advanced kidney disease. As we began to talk in English (the language indicated in his chart), it was clear to me that he spoke another language. “Do you speak another language?” I asked.

“Yes, Spanish,” he said.

Far into my Spanish learning, I once spent a summer in a Spanish speaking country and had to go to the hospital. I remember how scared I was—not because I didn’t feel comfortable in Spanish—but because going to the hospital is scary: there are medical words that doctors use that even fluent, native speakers do not understand.

“Si prefiere, puedo cambiar a español,” I said. As a physician, I see it as my job to take the cognitive load of communicating so that patients can just ask questions about their health. He preferred Spanish. I saw him take a sigh of relief I recognized when I was able to communicate more easily with someone. To me, this story is special precisely because I am not special: through my lived experience I was able to leverage my identities/experiences in the spirit of patient care. The intersection and fluidity between my multiple identities is an asset: both the “good” ones welcomed by the gatekeepers, and the “bad” ones rejected by the gatekeepers.

* * *

Across both of these autoethnographic accounts, María’s and Justin’s, we see the impact of gatekeeping on different community members. In María’s story, we see how gatekeeping encountered at school—and rooted in ableism—restricted her sister’s access to bilingual education and limited her capacity to support her family and introduced tensions to an interpersonal relationship. This was done on account of reducing the mental load of learning bilingually on her sister who was suspected of having a learning disability without accounting for Hilary’s multilingual needs and capacities. In Justin’s retelling, we also see the ways in which gatekeeping denies marginalized people their internal capacity. As such, on account of gatekeeping and under

the guise of accountability, individuals and communities are denied access to their own gifts and needs, making them constantly dependent on external evaluation, (dis)approval, and positioning.

Gatekeeping as Distraction

In her talk “A Humanist View,” Toni Morrison notably remarked that,

The function, the very serious function of racism... is distraction. It keeps you from doing your work [emphasis removed]. It keeps you explaining over and over again, your reason for being. Somebody says you have no language and you spend 20 years proving that you do. Somebody says your head isn't shaped properly so you have scientists working on the fact that it is. Somebody says you have no art, so you dredge that up. Somebody says you have no kingdoms so you dredge that up... None of this is necessary [emphasis removed]. There will always be one more thing [emphasis removed]. (1975, p. 7)

We agree that the function of racism—like any system of oppression (e.g., linguisticism, ableism, xenophobia, transphobia)—is distraction. Narratives surrounding the linguistic practices of racialized, pathologized, and dehumanized people/communities have positioned their language use as a viable indication of savagery versus humanity, sedition versus nationalism, depravity versus capacity, deficiencies versus abilities, and inferiority versus superiority. As such, minoritized language practices were used to validate systems of oppression. In defense of the cultural and communal practices and knowledges of linguistically marginalized communities, bilingual educators and advocates sought out ways to legitimize bilingual education (Cioè-Peña, 2022) by aligning it with White interests and appeasing the White (normative) gaze (Cioè-Peña, 2020). This was done in order to ensure that racially and linguistically-minoritized children would have access to high-quality instruction in school settings that also valued their home language practices (Valdes, 1997). However, in attempting to elevate the status of bilingual education (Cioè-Peña, 2017a, 2017b), program areas like DLBE, developed with justice and equity in mind, were usurped by capitalists' interests and deemed elite (Valdez et al., 2016).

The aim of DLBE programs is to bring together a mix of English-dominant learners and users of a language other than English to create a community buoyed by linguistic and academic exchanges. Within this setting, anglophone children “develop a high level of proficiency in a ‘foreign’ language while receiving a first-rate education” while culturally and linguistically diverse children “benefit from having instruction in their mother tongue, as well as by interacting with English-speaking peers” (Valdes, 1997, p. 392). However, as much as we may want to position and perceive language practices as neutral, Valdes (1997) also noted that “bilingualism can be both an advantage and a disadvantage, depending on the student’s position in the hierarchy of power” (p. 420). Decades later, Chávez-Moreno (2021) affirmed how in many settings DLBE programs function “as white property—namely,[reinforcing] White material advantages and racial hierarchies by preserving white identity as valuable” (p.1129). As such, there exists a major tension between those whom these programs are meant to serve (and to what end) and those who are actually serve along with the applied outcomes and implications. Freire (2021) defines critical consciousness as the ability to notice a tension, name it, and then act on it. Without critical consciousness, people are subject to being positioned/treated as passive objects “incapable of participating in the process of his own recuperation” (Freire, 2021, p. 12). An absence of critical consciousness also contradicts the process of “fundamental democratization” (Freire, 2021, p. 12) by sustaining the violence of

anti-dialogue, silence, and suppression as a way to stifle the development of consciousness. It is within this vein that we challenge the discourse of gatekeeping within language education that positions exclusivity/inclusivity along the lines of deservedness and belonging (Clark, 2018). As such, gatekeeping mechanisms act as a barrier to the critical consciousness needed for coalition building and liberatory action because “the important thing is to help [people and communities] help themselves, to place them in consciously critical confrontation with their problems, to make them the agents of their own recuperation” (Freire, 2021, p. 13).

Returning to both of our opening stories, we can see how ideologies of bilingualism as an advantage for those in power (e.g., North American citizens, English-dominant) and a disadvantage for the disenfranchised (e.g., racialized immigrants and/or dis/abled learners; Cioè-Peña, 2020) can go from a cautionary tale to an internalized perspective that hinders the development of critical consciousness: “For without an increasingly critical consciousness [people] are not able to integrate themselves into a transitional society, marked by intense change and contradictions” (Freire, 2021, p. 13). Thus, as a person unable to integrate themselves into the English dominant society, in her comments, Paty positions bilingualism as a tool that can abate or interrupt racism rather than a practice to build connection and community. This internalization highlights the ways in which systems of oppression are sustained by diverting people’s attention away from dismantling existing systems and creating new ones towards a space where they are constantly needed to establish and/or prove their own worth (Morrison, 1975). As such, in order to take up critical consciousness in DLBE, it is imperative that we (a) name the existing tension in how we approach language teaching and learning as an individualistic, meritocratic endeavor rather than a critically conscious, communal practice, and (b) imagine new ways forward, together.

We come to this work from two, seemingly, vastly different fields—education and medicine—that, at their core, face the same issues and problems from the applied contexts to the theoretical discourses that continue to position racialized people as inferior and deserving of their fates while wholly ignoring issues of systemic oppression and institutionalized gatekeeping. While issues of oppression continue to surface in research, discourse on gatekeeping is limited. As such, in this paper, we endeavor to think about the ways we as multilingual people—across positionalities and epistemologies, within and beyond educational settings—can forge new paths forward. We believe paths forward require multiple agents, roles, and steps. As such, we aim to present the need for moving away from gatekeeping practices rooted in individualism and scarcity mentality in exchange for goalkeeping practices focused on coalition building, equity, justice, and interconnectedness. We do this by first outlining the ways in which gatekeeping permeates language education across K-12 settings. We then highlight how these practices are internalized by children who grow up to be adults. Finally, we present a new possibility for relating what we call “goalkeeping” which is rooted in the world’s most popular sport: fútbol.

Fútbol: Players, Fields ...Habitus?

Sports provide important insight into our understanding of education and society more broadly. The soccer field provides a convenient theoretical launching point to critically examine Bourdieu’s field in relation to how gatekeeping mechanisms function within language education programs/epistemologies.

This next section is an autoethnographic retelling from Justin. We start here to situate our ideas of goalkeeping in the lived experiences and communal practices of the people and communities we aim to elevate (i.e., those for whom the gates remain ever closed).

“You no speak English?” “Go back across the border!” angry parents yelled at us. I knew the parents were not really yelling at me. I am Black, and the rest of my team, save one White player, came from various Latin American communities and cultures. I’d heard countless forms of this type of hate on the soccer field. For almost a decade, I played competitive soccer for the Detroit Diesel, a travel team based in southwest Detroit. The team was funded by a local non-profit organization which granted us—primarily low-income minorities—access to high-level soccer. Despite being a physically undersized team who lacked access to elite soccer camps and fancy training facilities, we successfully climbed through the elite youth soccer leagues in the state. Our team’s success was in large part due to a superpower which other teams lacked: our communication. I think outsiders would attribute our communication superpower to the fact that most members on the team spoke Spanish. But for us, communication was much more than fluency in a single language.

Soccer, also known as fútbol/football outside of the United States (US), is the most popular sport in the world despite its middling popularity within the US. A full field for a professional soccer match consists of 11 players on each team, ten of whom are allowed to use any part of the body except their arms and hands to score a goal by propelling the soccer ball into their opponent’s net. The final eleventh player, the goalkeeper, is permitted to use their hands within a specified area on the field as the final line of defense to prevent the opposing team from scoring. I played sweeper, the last defenseman before the goalkeeper. I was the goalkeepers figurative “hitman” as it was my job to clean up anything that broke through our team’s defenses. To succeed, our goalkeeper and I were in constant communication. This had the potential to be complicated given that I primarily spoke English and our goalkeeper primarily spoke Spanish. In fact, each teammate had different Spanish and English fluencies.

Effective communication meant that all 11 players on the field constantly anticipated the needs of the others. Communication meant everyone learned key words in both languages. For me, a non-Spanish speaker at the time, key words were things like cancha (soccer field), esquina (corner kick), fuera lugar (offsides), and cambio (switch the ball to the other side of the field). Some were literal translations and others, contextual ones. Communication involved interpreting tone and hand signals in high pressure moments. Communication was knowing each team member’s language preferences and then transitioning to the preferred language of the receiver. Differential language fluencies contributed to our team dynamic but did not limit one’s value to the team. To accomplish our collective goal of winning, communication was everyone’s job.

Our White competitors—and especially their parents—would become infuriated whenever our diminutive team began winning while leveraging our collective communication skills. “Speak English!” they spewed. The slurs began when we were less than ten years old and only got worse as we got older and learned to quip back. Our competitors, clearly accustomed to an English dominated America, perceived us as taking what they deserved as we performed a highly skilled athletic task while translanguaging. I was not aware of it at the time, but the team’s translanguaging taught me much more than just “soccer Spanish.” And while it took a while, it wasn’t until ten years later that I was

skilled enough to be certified to provide care directly as a physician to Spanish-speaking patients without an interpreter.

Conceptual Understandings

We are interdisciplinary scholars who root our understandings of critical consciousness in our work using intersectional frameworks rooted in Black feminist theory (Crenshaw, 1991; Hooks, 1989; Lorde, 2020) namely, DisCrit (Annamma et al., 2013, 2018) and raciolinguistics (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Rosa & Flores, 2017). As racialized and pathologized people, we have personally seen how the tokenization of gatekeeping as a function of systemic oppression hinders individual capacity *and* as people of color for our “success.” We also understand the communal care that is needed to encounter any growth within hegemonic systems is often erased in the interest of elevating individuals and protecting oppressive institutions and systems. As such, we first enact a critical disabilities raciolinguistic perspective as an integrated conceptual framework to guide our thinking. We extend this work by thinking about the function of gatekeeping within Bourdieu’s understanding of capital, habitus, and fields. Finally, after articulating our understandings of critical consciousness, we take up identity safety (Bullock et al., n.d.) as a critical practice for enacting critical consciousness in educational spaces that counters gatekeeping and re-roots language teaching and learning to justice-oriented community- and coalition-building.

CDR Perspective

Bringing together central tenets of DisCrit (Annamma et al., 2013, 2018) and a raciolinguistic perspective (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Rosa & Flores, 2017), a CDR perspective (Cioè-Peña, 2020a, 2020b; Phuong & Cioè-Peña, 2022) addresses the needs of linguistically-minoritized people of color with or without disabilities by revealing—and countering—the White normative gaze that currently drives mainstream perception. In other words, language is used to enforce abstract categorizations like race and ability, but at the same time, perceptions of language are informed by concepts like race and ability. Thus, a CDR perspective argues people are not only racialized but also pathologized on account of their linguistic practices. It acknowledges that this pathologization happens not based on individual or communal language practices, but instead on others’ perceptions, who, regardless of their own identity, enforce the values and perspectives under a White normative gaze.

Returning to Justin’s autoethnography, we see the ways in which multiple systems of oppression converge as reflected in how his soccer team was treated. The assertion by hecklers that “You no speak English?” and “Go back across the border!” reflects raciolinguistic ideologies that associate Spanish language use with foreignness which is often based on the positioning of the user, in this case racialized children. There, the visions of DLBE as a cross-racial, cross-linguistic unifying medium is shattered with the audiences’ assertion that languages other than English (LOTEs) and their users are foreign and unwelcome. Mentions of language use as “a superpower” underscore the ways in which multilingual people and particularly users of LOTEs are constantly pushing back on forces that position them as inferior and incapable, harkening back to historic, social, and scientific assertions of bilingualism as a marker of disability (Cioè-Peña, 2017a, 2022). As such, a CDR perspective allows us to understand the negative experiences encountered by the members of Justin’s youth soccer team stemmed not only from xenophobia, linguisticism, racism, classism, or ableism but from a confluence of all these forms of systemic oppression.

Understanding Gatekeeping Through Field(s), Player(s), and Habitus

To understand the function of gatekeeping and how its mechanisms become internalized practices, we must first understand the conditions that validate gatekeeping practices and outcomes. We approach our understanding of the conditions through Bourdieu's articulations of the field(s), players, and habitus. Generally, Bourdieu (1993) defines the field as physical or ideological spaces with clear delineated boundaries. Fields can vary by epistemology, like fields of education and fields of medicine, yet there are "general laws of fields" relating to their function and specific forms of relating between "the newcomer who tries to break through the entry barrier and the dominant agent who will try to defend the monopoly and keep out the competition" (p. 72). Here we also see the emergence of the players: the newcomer(s) and the dominant agent(s). Within the field, players use capital, material or symbolic, to gain access to and to position themselves on the field. The habitus, or the socialized norms, is the behaviors, attitudes, dispositions, and expectations that determine how the game is played, how the players communicate, and how one is granted legitimacy in the field. In other words, "habitus as the feel for the game is the social game embodied and turned into a second nature" (Bourdieu, 1990/2022, p. 63). However, an early or "natural" feel for the game should not, in and of itself, be understood as superiority, since "a 'gift' is nothing other than the feel for the game socially constituted by early immersion in the game, that class racism turns into a nature, a natural property unequally allocated by nature and thereby legitimated" (Bourdieu, 1990/2022, p. 109).

It is through this understanding of the interplay between the conditions and parameters of the field, the roles of the players, and the habitus required for engaging in the game, that we can see how gatekeeping mechanisms can emerge in the interest of protecting knowledges and institutions and be internalized in the interest of playing the game "well." Bourdieu (1993) asserts, however, that a desire to play the game well is central to "protecting the various games from total revolutions, which could destroy not only the dominant agents and their domination, but the game itself" (p. 74). He goes on to note that it "is the very size of the investment, in time, effort, and so on, presupposed by entry into the game" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 74) that leads newcomers to adopt the norms of the game even if they counter their own internal desires and motivations. As such, we can understand how marginalized communities internalize the perception that their struggles (e.g., linguistic, economic, academic) are emblematic of their participation in the game, and failure to succeed is then positioned as reflective of individual deficiencies without accounting for the ways in which dominant agents and the "game," in this case the social and educational conditions, demand commitment to the game's existing power structures and one's malleability.

Within language education and especially DLBE, gatekeeping takes many forms including (but not limited to) restricted access to bilingual settings on account of (1) suspicion, or presence, of a disability (Cioè-Peña, 2020a, 2021; Muñoz-Muñoz et al., 2022); (2) formal language assessments outcomes (Kanno & Kangas, 2014; Schissel, 2019); (3) bias against home language practices (Baker-Bell, 2020); and (4) perceptions of diversity/difference as deficit (Swartz, 2009). One's ability to access these spaces and be successful is heavily dependent on one's place in the field, the capital they possess, and the habitus. One's entry, however, often becomes the first step in adopting gatekeeping ideologies and mechanisms since,

[T]hose who take part in the struggle help to reproduce the game by helping—more or less completely, depending on the field—to produce belief in the value of the stakes. The new players have to pay an entry fee which consists in recognition of the value of the game

(selection and co-option always pay great attention to the indices of commitment to the game, investment in it) and in (practical) knowledge of the principles of the functioning of the game. They are condemned to use the strategies of subversion, but, if they are not to incur exclusion from the game, these strategies have to remain within certain limits. (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 74)

It is through this limitation on subversion that gatekeeping is able to go inwards. Ideological gatekeeping happens ideologically “societal forces, especially in schools” (Garcia & Wei, 2013, p. 16), enforce a call, an interpellation, by which bilingual speakers are often able to recognize themselves only as subjects that speak two separate languages. Ideologies reflecting the expectation/superiority of two perfect, yet separate monolinguals in one become internalized to the point that bilingual speakers become complicit in their own domination (Garcia & Wei, 2013), ultimately giving more credence to certain linguistic practices over others. Thus, minoritized people becoming complicit in the maintenance of existing power dynamics even as they are actively—and negatively—subjected to them. Furthermore, these ideologies help validate gatekeeping mechanisms (e.g., antiblackness, respectability politics, meritocracy) which are then enacted as policies or practices that result in the policing of others and/or the self in accordance with the White normative gaze (Cioè-Peña, 2020b).

Let us return to Paty’s story. The field is schooling, the players are Paty and her children and each of these possesses a different type of habitus based on the kinds of capital they can access and amass and how that capital is valued by other players in the field. It is here we can see how a mother, who fully intends to act in the best interest of her children, also serves as gatekeeper. When Dan was younger, he was diagnosed with a speech-language disability which resulted in the foregrounding of his English language development:

Yo me sentía impotente porque no podía ayudar a mi hijo, él no podía hablar... Cuando él empezó a ir a la escuela, él empezó a hacer muchos cambios, tanto como aquí en la casa como en la escuela. Lógico que él todas las clases las daban en inglés. Pero él podía ya pronunciar las cosas. Todavía, pero ya podía.³ (Phuong & Cioè-Peña, 2022, pp. 137, 138)

Due to the value she placed on English attainment, she and Dan’s service providers effectively restricted access to bilingual programming for her eldest child, while her “typically developing” child, Tanya, is encouraged to become bilingual in order to communicate with the “cleaning lady” (i.e., her subordinate). With regards to Tanya who is perceived as “normal”—and thus, has greater academic potential and, ultimately, upward mobility—Paty also acts as a gatekeeper. She reifies power dynamics that position language use as charitable or “not racist” towards the “cleaning lady” without any acknowledgement of value to Tanya as a racialized, culturally and linguistically diverse person; as the child of immigrants; or as a future doctor. This is in no way intended to blame Paty. By her own calculation, Dan’s learning disability limits his abilities to learn, and thus the focus should be on the most valuable skills and assets, in this case learning English. This is understood as setting Dan up for success within the field of education or schooling. This is one of the ways in which gatekeeping is internalized. At some point in her encounters with school agents on behalf of her children, she learned that some students were better

³ I felt powerless because I couldn’t help my son, he couldn’t speak... When he started going to school, he began to make many changes, both here at home and at school. Logical that all classes were taught in English. But he could already pronounce things for me.

candidates for bilingual education than others—and better candidacy, for her, was reflected by ability and proximity to normal, rather than need. As such, bilingualism was an option for Tanya but not for Dan. It became a form of capital, and also a field that could be formally acquired, assessed, and given by some players and not by others.

Critical Consciousness in DLBE

As previously mentioned, for Freire, critical consciousness was defined as one’s ability to uncover/recognize systems of oppression, be critical of them, and commit to engaging in action that dismantles said systems. As such, critical consciousness is rooted in a cyclical process that is marked by critical analysis, sense of agency, and critical action (El-Amin et al., 2017). Critical education scholars have called for the redefining of educational systems, practices, and structures in relation to our collective goals rather than sustaining existing inequitable structures. To this end, Patel (2014) notes that continuing to treat knowledge as “fundamentally an individual and containable entity” sustains colonial practices in which the most marginalized, and yet most mined for research, “don’t have existing systems of redress if they wish to maintain ownership of their knowledges” (p. 370). Therefore, if we truly want to embed critical consciousness into DLBE, we must first recognize the system(s) of oppression within which it is situated (e.g., xenophobia, racism, ableism). We must then analyze the system(s) using critical lenses and, finally, act in ways that represent our commitment to dismantling the system(s) in a way that also rejects reproductions or constructions of (novel) power hierarchies.

To this end, scholars within the field of DLBE have taken critical consciousness by satiating it within critical pedagogy, teacher training, and humanizing research (Cervantes-Soon et al., 2017; Chávez-Moreno, 2022; Freire & Feinauer, 2022; Palmer et al., 2019; Patel, 2012). With regards to critical pedagogy, Cervantes-Soon et al. (2017) noted that “critical consciousness can be developed through expanding politically oriented curriculum and instruction that originate in the very knowledges and ways that students from marginalized communities experience language” (p. 418). As such, the development of critical consciousness in DLBE “involves the process of overcoming pervasive myths through an understanding of the role of power in the formation of oppressive conditions” (Cervantes-Soon et al., 2017, p. 419) through praxis. This praxis “would promote an understanding of the histories of colonization, imperialism, forced migration, racism, and neoliberalism, which are reflected in” (p. 421) language teaching and learning spaces, and greatly shape and influence social perceptions around language use. Chávez-Moreno (2022), specifically names the need for critical-racial consciousness, noting that “dual-language programs need to explicitly include critical-racial consciousness as a social justice goal” adding that programs should “be designed to enable and promote the instruction of critical-racial consciousness, otherwise, a ‘new racism’ emerges that does not deal with structural issues causing racist outcomes” (p. 572).

This need for ingroup reflection and critical-racial consciousness is required in order to develop educational and community-oriented spaces “predicated upon the ability to, for example, refract learnings about power and status to our empirical data about immigrant upon immigrant exploitation” (Patel, 2012, p. 342). There is much discourse across DLBE, and bilingual education more broadly, about these programs affordances to serve as racially integrating spaces. However, that discourse often centers on White/Latinx binaries, obscuring the fact that Latinxs, like any ethnoracial group, experience intragroup discrimination that area racially bound and reflective of hegemonic Whiteness. As such, if we return to the opening vignettes, we can see how messages of bilingualism as a capital and resource ultimately become reduced to narratives that make bilingualism an asset and another marker of superiority for White anglophones while being

positioned as a marker of linguistic deficiency and inferiority, particularly for Black and Indigenous people (Cioè-Peña, 2022). It is precisely for this reason we believe identity safety should also be considered in relation to the enactment of critical consciousness. In the next section, we outline how gatekeeping can manifest even as communities engage in justice-oriented pursuits.

Shifting From the Field to the *Cancha*: Goalkeeping and Identity Safety

As Bourdieu has noted, across many professional arenas, gatekeeping is often enacted in the interest of maintaining existing power dynamics, protecting institutions, and safeguarding knowledge. Beyond the K-12 settings, many scholars of color who enter fields situated within the ivory tower (e.g., academic roles within the social and/or natural sciences) themselves are/were raised with an understanding of the fields, their role, and their odds. Often these ideas are communicated through constant messaging around model minority status, meritocracy, and North American exceptionalism. Even if scholars of color do not view themselves and their pursuits in relation to these individualistic principles, their successes and accomplishments will be positioned there by the community members who celebrate them and use their stories as encouragement and by the public, political, and interpersonal institutions that aim to use individual success and accomplishment(s) as indications that lack of representation is reflective of personal failures rather than systemic design. As such, when they arrive within these institutions, they find themselves easily adopting and internalizing gatekeeping practices that are misrepresented as makers of quality and, ultimately, belonging.

However, we highlight these forms of gatekeeping in the academy by underscoring its insidious and ubiquitous nature. Gatekeeping mentality penetrates the thinking of those from all identities and social classes, streaking past the defenses of the formally educated adults who study criticality, equity, and justice and who intend to leverage their positions and resources to elevate and liberate their communities. We note that even when culturally and linguistically diverse people gain entry into new fields, their success in the field can only come after they commit themselves fully to the game and all of its rules in the hopes of eventually moving from newcomer to dominant agent. However, as Bourdieu has indicated, that revolution is often partial and short lived, even for those who enter the field focused on challenging existing practices. That is because partial revolutions “do not call into question the very foundations of the game, its fundamental axioms, the bedrock of ultimate beliefs on which the whole game is based” (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 74). The reason for this is that entry into the game (e.g., the field of language education or medicine) is itself garnered through acquisition of “the practical knowledge of the principles of the game” along with “the whole history of the game, the whole past of the game, is present in each act of the game” (p. 74). These expectations and practices are put forth by the dominant agents whose “interests lie in conserving what is produced in the field, and in so doing to conserve themselves” (p. 74).

At its most fundamental level, gatekeeping deprives the marginalized of agency. There exists a paradox in the current game of service professions: while minoritized individuals bring diverse cultural wealth which helps to best serve the most marginalized in society, entry and maintenance in these roles demand adherence to professional standards steeped in uniformity and oppression. As the White normative gaze imposes expectations on the players, indoctrinating them into the hegemony of Whiteness, gatekeeping arises at both the individual and communal levels. Under the guise of professional advancement, we gatekeep ourselves by adhering to the rules of the game thus dissociating from our cultural wealth in order to acquiesce to hegemonic standards. What

begins as pretending to meet hegemonic standards becomes gradually integrated into our identities. As we educate and mentor, we gatekeep by rejecting those who stand too far outside of professional norms and advising those “promising few” to not disturb the dominant power dynamic too much.

Shifting from the field to the *cancha* represents a shift away from historically dominant anglocentric narratives and power dynamics. It represents a redefining of the game, now oriented towards cultural wealth, where crosslinguistic and intercultural coalition building are prioritized. ‘Shifting’ from the field to the *cancha* emphasizes this is an active process which requires both critical reflection and critical action within critical consciousness. Shifting to the *cancha* parallels a shift from gatekeeping towards goalkeeping. Gatekeeping implies there is a single person or small group who holds the power to decide whether to keep a person in or out. On the soccer field, while one player is the goalie, every player contributes to the collective act of goalkeeping: for corner kicks, the defender stands in the net to clear any ball that the goalie has missed; the midfielder drops back to prevent the ball from being crossed into traffic; and the striker, who always must be marked, keeps one player from the opposing team occupied at all times. Drawing on our intercultural and cross-disciplinary roots, below we provide an example of shifting from the field to the *cancha* and from gatekeeping to goalkeeping by introducing a theory of identity safety from within a medical context and draw parallels into DLBE.

Within medical education, there is recognition of the harms of our training and assessment systems which disproportionately impact minoritized learners (Bullock et al., 2020; Osseo-Asare, 2018; Teherani, 2018). Efforts to promote safety in the learning environment have overwhelmingly focused on strategies for supervising physicians or educators to respond to identity threats in defense of minoritized trainees (Ackerman-Barger, 2020; Davies, 2005; Hildebrand, 2020). Psychological safety, the dominant safety paradigm in medical education, views the person received by the psychologically safe environment as vulnerable and in need of protection (Edmonson, 2019). From this perspective, marginalized individuals are not considered agentic and are dependent upon their powerful supervisors, the gatekeepers, for safety. In 2023, Bullock et al. (2020), describe a grounded theory analysis of identity safety, which they define as the ability to exist as one’s authentic self without feeling the need to monitor how others perceive one’s identities.

Identity safety arises from an interconnected web of leveraging one’s identity in the service of one’s profession (termed *agency to serve*), interpersonal accountability to make others feel seen as whole individuals (termed *upholding personhood*), and community uplifting and support (termed *belonging*). Compared to psychological safety, which is a construct of the gatekeeping of safety, identity safety represents a goalkeeping framework where every individual in the learning environment has the ability to participate in creating safety for each other. As conceptualized, the importance of each individual’s contribution to identity safety is simultaneously elevated and reduced. As a framework of goalkeeping, each community member holds responsibility to positively contribute to the creation of safety. While increasing the role of everyone, identity safety simultaneously de-emphasizes the role of any one person to create safety for others. In alignment with culturally sustaining pedagogy, a lens of identity safety would encourage educators, particularly those in DLBE, to leverage their cultural wealth—and thereby more wholly actualize—their role as service professionals.

Goalkeeping requires a constant awareness of the collective goal and a critical consciousness that more than one path and more than one person can move the team towards that goal. It is in this way we can be attuned to our collective needs and actively respond to anything that breaks through our team’s defenses. Contrastingly, when systems or individuals force a single path to achieve a collective goal, they are gatekeeping. Professional identity formation, the socialization process of going from group outsider to professional, is replete with gatekeeping

barriers (Crues, 2015). In medicine, in addition to the standardized exams and financial barriers, the language of medicine is a major gatekeeping mechanism. With the current assessment practices in medicine, you cannot become a physician if you are unable to speak as a physician should. Regardless of whether you can practice strong clinical medicine, one's assumption of your competence depends upon your fluency in medical parlance. Linguistic gatekeeping occurs when society forces a single professional language. As a medical student, Justin was criticized and penalized in his evaluations when he said things like, "This is a 34-year-old woman, with a fever, high heart rate, mid-back pain, and burning while she pees, which seems to be a kidney infection." Instead, he was taught to say, "This 34-year-old woman is febrile, tachycardic, with costovertebral angle tenderness, and dysuria, concerning for pyelonephritis." This linguistic gatekeeping is done with the belief that uniform communication will lead to optimal interprofessional communication. Having a way to efficiently and effectively communicate across healthcare providers is important. Yet, in dictating that, all communication must occur exclusively through a singular language, and in penalizing those who do not comply, naturally one's facility with other languages atrophies. Similar practices are enacted in language education classrooms when students are denied their innate linguistic practices, particularly those that align or reflect divergent forms of languaging like unitary translanguaging or crip linguistics (García et al., 2021; Henner & Robinson, 2023).

In the United States, the results of the dominance of this medical "dialect" of English, when combined with other gatekeeping mechanisms, are two-fold: (1) there are few providers who have named language (e.g., Spanish, Cantonese, Tagalog, etc.) concordance with many minoritized patients, and (2) many physicians literally forget how to speak plain English with patients. Beyond this, medical "dialect" also gets adopted into other institutions through the development of policy and programming meant to understand and support learners labeled as disabled (i.e., student's classified as having an impairment that impacts their learning). A trip to the hospital will demonstrate that even those native speakers of the dominant language are harmed by linguistic gatekeeping practices. Inclusive of (English-using) monolinguals, linguistic gatekeeping results in the loss of one's ability to code switch; because of an inability to speak in a way that non-physicians can understand, health care providers threaten their goals of helping patients live the healthiest lives possible. Similarly, educators may be unaware of the negative messaging they are communicating to families through their linguistic choices and/or through the rejection of linguistic practices that differ from their own. María has concrete memories of being told by language professionals, both in childhood and in adulthood as a professional bilingual educator, that her Dominican Spanish was "subpar" in relation to those of other Latin American (read Whiter) countries with more refined (i.e., White approximating) dialects and populations like Colombia and Venezuela. Negative assessment and evaluation of people's linguistic practices is one of the most insidious ways in which educators in all fields commonly practice linguistic gatekeeping. Gatekeeping under the guise of teaching effective communication, educators prohibit the use of slang, translanguaging, etc. Most do not recognize them as equally valuable and effective ways of communication. By not nurturing these linguistic practices, we limit the ability to communicate effectively in our community outside of the classroom. A shift from the field to the *cancha* would, for us, recognize we are all in community with each other and, as such, must maintain flexible ways of languaging, seeking collective communication and understanding without using standardization as a gatekeeping mechanism that actively suppresses marginalized ways of languaging. It is only through the *leveraging of our collective communication skills* that we can move as one, ensuring that every member is seen and heard.

Shifting to goalkeeping helps us see how Paty's and María's experiences could have been different and how much they could have benefited from the group dynamics that Justin was able to

communicate on the field. In Paty's excerpt, we are able to see gatekeeping in the way that Paty was compelled by society to believe that there was only a single path for Dan to access special education resources: via a monolingual English curriculum. However, in community, we can collectively see that this decision results in a loss of home language practice which ultimately represents much more than a loss of vocabulary. We also see how the devaluation of disabled Black and Brown bodies is reified in foregrounding access to Tanya who is expected to be a doctor. Goalkeeping could help us consider how we can create structures which support physicians remaining answerable to their communities as opposed to being gatekept for disabilities that could support their service to patients. Similarly, consider Hilariza's removal from bilingual education on account of suspected learning delays. These excerpts also affirmed the ways in which bodyminds are positioned as either broken and in need of fixing or whole and capable of fixing others.

However, neither Paty's or María's mothers felt this way about their daughters but were forced to make decisions based on their and their children's individual positions in the field. However, with a collaborative approach focused on the shared goal of supporting multidimensional and culturally affirmed children, other avenues could have been considered and put into practice. In other words, children in schools should have access to multilingual curricula in service of the collective. As such, when a child grows up to be a doctor, like Paty hopes for her child, they will be able to use their linguistic skills to create greater access for their patients rather than just to communicate with domestic workers. Similarly, a child would learn multilingually not in preparation for a future career but in order to actively engage in their communities and families. Instead, Dan's and Paty's, as well as María's, journeys become cautionary, but unavoidable, tales about how language education access is essentialized, stratified, and stripped, ultimately, from the people it was meant to benefit most.

Conclusion

As we have outlined here, gatekeeping is a major issue within socially just learning spaces. We shared that in order to move from gatekeeping to goalkeeping, we must also adopt an understanding of language as a form of answerability rather than another form of property. We also identified and illustrated the four most pressing ways that gatekeeping, individually and collectively, harms us: (1) the imposition of secret-keeping culture, particularly around cases pertaining to marginalized people's experiences with subjugation and abuse; (2) the promotion of individualism through meritocracy; (3) positioning acculturation as a necessary marker for success; and finally, (4) through the persistent reifying of hierarchies and the devaluation of some roles, voices, ideologies, etc. over others—particularly through bias of epistemologies rooted in racialized and gendered norms (Settles et al., 2021, 2022). As such, we believe these are the four areas where we, as critically conscious educators, can and should focus our efforts. We propose that we release gatekeeping practices as we shift from the field to the *cancha*. Goalkeeping then would center around (a) systematic transparency and collective accountability focused on harm prevention and repair, (b) the promotion of collective growth through collaboration and interdependence, (c) centering cultural practices and ways of being for shared learning and mutual celebration, and finally, (d) through the persistent attention to and rejection of hierarchies in exchange for a return to intergenerational, communal ways of being. We see these as necessary moves in enacting critical consciousness within, across, and beyond DLBE.

As Freire wrote, "The oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become oppressors" (Freire, 1996, p. 27). This tendency towards oppression is notable: just as a

rubber band will spring back towards its resting state. As such, we need a collective conversation on changing the game and the ways in which players show up and engage with one another in the interest of collective justice and freedom. We hope we have at least offered a place to stop and imagine new ways of moving forward.

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