Discuss in detail **one** of the terms listed below in relation to issues of **language *and* race.** Use at least three scholars from the course, and base your answers primarily on the texts we studied in the class. Cover the meaning(s) of the term as well as its strategic uses. Throughout your response, you should be making an argument that demonstrates that the concept under discussion opens up important areas of inquiry for the RWS field.

b) standard language ideology

The concept of standard language ideologies (SLI), as discussed by Davila, is a way in which language is thought of as existing in one correct form. These notions of standard language ideology are deeply imbedded in the United States. As a result, there is a constant push toward establishing and continuing to uphold the single correct from of speaking and writing. SLI does not only affect multilingual students and second language learners. It can also be harmful to monolingual students, but more importantly SLI is damaging to society outside of the academic environment. SLI practices are an example of how language practices create and/or determine identities for those who deviate outside the standard. In “Whose cultural has capital?,” Yosso (2005) urges for more scholarship and pedagogies using a CRT (critical race theory) lens in the classroom, because CRT can be used to circumvent SLI practices. An example of the connection and how CRT can be between language and race is found in Gross’s (2013) concept of the Caucasian cloak. The purpose of this paper is to first define standard language ideologies (SLI), then to analyze the ways in which SLI can create or determine identity, and race, through indexicality, and to address the work of current scholars, such as Davila (2012), Matsuda (2006), Mangelsdorf (2010) that address and/or resist these specific language ideologies.

Davila (2012) brings attention to SLI in composition studies in the way scholarship “recognizes ‘standard’ edited American English (SEAE) as a gatekeeper that often excludes nontraditional students from academia” (p. 181). This role as gatekeeper leads to the negation of any and all language practices that fall outside of the established standard. SLI demands that everything that exists outside what is considered correct does not have value. This affects students who identify as second language learners or native English speakers that speak a variety of English that is not SEAE. Standard language ideologies, according to Davila (2012), “provides the belief system and justification necessary for mandating SEAE and denigrating other language varieties ­­– and the people who use them – and masks the politics associated with such acts” (p. 184). This specific belief system ignores linguistic capital that exists outside the established standard. For Yosso (2005), linguistic capital creates separation between those that possess the skills to effectively use these specific and accepted language practices, and those that come into the classroom with knowledge of other language practices (p. 75).

This separation and notion of the one correct form leads to what Davila (2012) refers to as indexicality. Indexicality is defined as “the creation of semiotic links between linguistic forms and social meanings” (p. 183). These identities are the result of people relying on “different types of language practices, language features, or languages in general to determine or create identity, to assign various characteristics to people and social groups” (p. 183). This is especially detrimental because linguistic practices are the basis for assigning identities to people, and the identities assigned are not ones that possess value.

Yosso (2005) supplement’s Davila’s indexicality argument by noting that “The assumption follows that People of Color ‘lack’ the social and cultural capital required for social mobility. As a result, schools most often work from this assumption in structuring ways to help ‘disadvantaged’ students whose race and class background has left them lacking necessary knowledge, social skills, abilities, and cultural capital” (p. 70). For Davila (2012),
 The preference of one language variety over others makes it possible to discriminate based on linguistic practices (p. 184). This discrimination acts itself out in SLI practices, because such practices assign negative value to other language practices. This can manifest itself in more places than the classroom. SLI, when acting as a gatekeeper, is constricting to multilingual and monolingual people both in and outside the classroom.

In “The Caucasian Cloak,” Ariela J. Gross (2013) demonstrates the ways in which the the Mexicans, and Mexican Americans, were “othered” by the dominant group based on their different cultural and language practices. They made them “white” by law, but separated based on their cultural and language practices – which began with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The Treaty Guadalupe Hidalgo awarded citizenship to the Mexican people living in Texas and California. However, their citizenship did nothing to protect them from Jim Crow laws and practices in the Southwest. The colonized in this example are the newly made U.S. citizens that were racially classified as white, but still subjected to Jim Crow laws. As Gross explains, “whiteness operated as a Caucasian Cloak to obscure the practices of Jim Crow and make them appear benign” (Gross, 2013, p. 154). This cloak seemingly protected Mexicans from Jim Crow practices, because they were white by racial classification, but the label of “white,” did not give them the protection afforded to that racial identity. They were the almost the same, but not quite. They were white, unlike the colonized but the dominant group found a way to make them different, and so they continued to be a marginalized group. It allowed the dominant group to openly practice prejudice against them, because “if Mexican Americans were white, then they were represented as long as Whites were” (Gross, 2013, 155). For example, this allowed for a jury to be made up of whites, and still be considered a group of their peers.

Mexicans possessed a great deal of fluidity in establishing an identity for themselves. The way in which they were creates as the “other” by the dominant group set up a battle between the construction of their race as white, and their cultural and language practices. In this sense culture and language were viewed in opposition to their racial classification. This allowed for the idea of mestizaje to form, and as a result of this mixed view, Mexicans often identified themselves differently even amongst themselves. In short, no universal identity existed, and so they often times embraced the mixed aspect of their culture, and identity. The fluidity allowed for them to reinforce their own cultural practices as defining their identity, and not the classification supplied to them by their colonizers. This resistance to the labels placed on them by the dominant group allowed for them to view their mestizaje as a positive. They viewed themselves as stronger because of the mixed aspect of their identity, and as a result, Mexican Americans were able to oppose the dominant group by using “a spectrum of languages to identify their racial and national identity, so that it is difficult to know which statements they really meant and which ones were attempts to score points with white lawmakers, judges, or juries” (Gross, 2013, p. 157). While this example is focused on the 1930s and 1940s, it demonstrates how SLIs are upheld, and how those in power can set these standards. As Mangelsdorf (2010) points out “because so many people who speak nonstandard forms of ‘English’ or languages other than ‘English’ are not white, these manifestations of the standard language ideology, for some, serve as coded expressions of racism” (p. 117).

 SLI is deep rooted in academia, and society. The hierarchy of language supports systemic discrimination. Resisting SLI proves to be difficult. Mangelsdorf (2010) points out that policies enforced in education promote SLI “inevitably support linguistic containment and standard language ideology at the expense of students’ lived languages” (p. 121). This will not change until multiple languages, and linguistic practices are valued in and outside the classroom. For instructors of composition, and the field of RWS, the language practices of second-language learners, and students that use other varieties of English must become part of the classroom. Matsuda (2006) urges that instructors make the classroom a “multilingual space.” The challenge isn’t merely resisting these ideologies, or developing practices that value what SLI does not. The challenge is continuing to work on incorporating other linguistic practices when SLI is so ingrained in education, and society that any change will be incredibly slow. Similar to Matsuda’s call to challenge monolingual space, Yosso argues that theories and academic research need to include the knowledge of people usually excluded, which is to say that to counter the SLI the academy must work to correct itself through work in CRT by working from the “perspective that Communities of Color are places with multiple strengths” (p. 82).
 With the notion of SLI there is pressure on instructors to adhere to the standard language practices, and expectations are that students should master them. The myth of linguistic homogeneity is the acceptance of the “dominant image of students in English studies is the assumption that students are by default native speakers of a privileged variety of English from the United States” (Matsuda, 2006, p. 639). Therefore, when a student’s writing doesn’t match the dominant image, or standard, it becomes othered. This problematic because of the common goal of composition classes is to assist students in bettering their writing. When an instructor views writing outside of the dominant image as inferior, they make assumptions about their practices. These assumptions about students’ writing are always negative. Language practices that may be helpful in improving students’ writing go ignored if they fall outside of the dominant image.

The study SLI are of great importance to the field of RWS. RWS can be the flagship for promoting, accepting, and encouraging multiple language practices in the classroom. RWS can move beyond linguistic profiling. Matsuda urges that instructors resist SLIs and approach the college composition classroom as the “multilingual space that it is, where the presence of language differences is the default” (649). Creating a classroom that is a “multilingual space” will include, as opposed to exclude under SLI practices, more than one language practice. It gives students a space to decide which practice best serves their needs. RWS instructors and scholars, should be aware of the role of SLI in education, and the many ways in which their classrooms can include what the established standard excludes.

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