

Pidgin as Resistance in Elif Batuman's *The Idiot*: The Psychology of Power and Acquisition in Selin's ESL Tutoring

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Abstract—This research examines the intersection of psychology and linguistics in Elif Batuman's *The Idiot*, concentrating on the protagonist Selin Karadağ's experiences working as an ESL instructor in a housing complex. Through a detailed analysis of tutoring sessions with students Joaquín and Linda, this study examines the shortcomings of traditional English instruction in a repressive institutional setting. It specifically examines the evolution of language anomalies, such as the expression "Papel iss blonk." It claims that the "pidgin" that develops between the student and the tutor is a type of psycholinguistic resistance against the institutional force of authority, in addition to being a failure to learn. Grounded in critical pedagogy and a psycho-narratological perspective, this study examines how Selin's linguistic training conflicts with the reality of teaching, leading to a crisis of intimacy, authority, and self-perception. The findings suggest that learning one's own language is a defensive strategy that addresses the colonial relations present in the process of learning standard English and offers insight into Selin's overall existential crisis in terms of meaning and communication. In contrast to simple grammar, language acquisition is shown in this study to be a complex process of identity, negotiating power, and psychological safety.

Index Terms—psycholinguistics, power dynamics, ESL pedagogy, identity formation, language acquisition, critical pedagogy

I. INTRODUCTION

Batuman's *The Idiot* (2017) is a seminal work of contemporary literature that explores the relationship between language, meaning, and identity formation. The novel takes place in the 1990s at Harvard University, where the protagonist, Selin Karadağ, a freshman of Turkish heritage, navigates the complexities of college life, cultural alienation, and the onset of maturity. The main focus of Selin's experience is her obsession with linguistics and the idea that language constructs reality, which is reflected in both her academic preferences and her personal life. Selin, a linguistics major, is exposed to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and struggles to comprehend the notion that other languages make you think about other things (Batuman, 2017). This language determinism forms her world and corresponds to current studies on cognition that propose that language habits play a major role in thought processes (Boroditsky, 2011). Therefore, Selin considers communication not only as a form of sharing information but also as a psychological creation of the self. Nevertheless, as much as the action in the novel is based on the digital communication of Selin and the romantic confusions, another dark-side subplot of the novel is her employment as a tutor in an adult educational program that provides in-depth information about the psychology of power and acquisition.

Despite the richness of this subplot, Selin and Ivan's email correspondence has received minimal prior critique, which reads the book through the lens of digital intimacy and the epistolary letter form. Although Selin's love growth has been better understood thanks to these works, the linguistic and psychological parts of the ESL tutoring narrative have not received much attention. Specifically, there is a lack of understanding of how the collapse of traditional language instruction becomes a site of resistance rather than just a failure. Selin's relationships with her students, particularly the development of a unique linguistic code with Joaquín, reveal a complex power struggle that mirrors Selin's larger existential concerns. When Joaquín struggles with the phrase "The paper is white," he finally comes to "Papel is blonk", Selin reflects, "It wasn't English. It was some kind of creole. No—a pidgin" (Batuman, 2017). In addition to being a pedagogical error, it is a compilation of the creation of a shared psychological environment that goes beyond the institutional requirements. This is similar to Canagarajah's (1999) assertion that code-meshing is necessary to oppose linguistic imperialism.

According to this research, the pidgin that Selin and the students worked on in their tutoring sessions served as a psychological haven and a weapon against the institutionalized oppression of normal English learning. To understand how the student and tutor benefit from the tutor's use of nonstandard grammar, this study examines the usage of a psycholinguistic and critical pedagogical framework. According to this thesis, this linguistic hybridity demonstrates that Selin has a crisis of authority and intimacy and that her position as a knowledge importer is transformed into that of an importer of knowledge: "interpreter of a language that only he and I can understand" (Batuman, 2017). This transformation questions colonial relations in language teaching, indicating that successful relationships are usually

founded on the failure of standard communication and not on success. Selin's frustration: "Why should I have to figure it out? Why don't any messages come to me clearly?" (Batuman, 2017) emphasizes the mental strain of the need to fill such gaps, which has been noted in many cases of bilingual emotional processing (Pavlenko, 2005). However, inside this load, one communicates with the other.

These themes are systematically discussed in the remainder of this article. The literature review will position the study within the current body of knowledge on linguistic relativity in fiction and power relationships in ESL teaching to determine the gap that this research will fill. The methodology section describes the qualitative textual analysis strategy, including how certain scenes between Joaquín and Linda are coded as psychological and linguistic signs. The formation of pidgin as a form of resistance, the psychological consequences of the failure of the tutoring process on Selin's identity, and its implications for the overall understanding of power in language acquisition are analyzed in the discussion. In the last section, we review the results, highlight how ambiguous language may create closeness, and suggest directions for further study of Batuman's work. This presentation uses this structure to demonstrate how the acquisition of language in *The Idiot* is not based on grammatical rules but on the complex negotiation of power, identity, and psychological safety.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of linguistic relativity provides a framework for understanding how the structure of language affects mental and emotional experiences. Many literary and linguistic works have addressed the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which asserts that a language's lexical and grammatical patterns dictate the reality perceptions of its speakers (Whorf, 1956). Literary analysis can benefit from this hypothesis, particularly in cases where characters intentionally struggle with the relationship between language and thought, even though more nuanced accounts of linguistic influence have largely supplanted earlier linguistic determinism (Boroditsky, 2011). Batuman explores the psychological implications of linguistic relativity via Selin's use of the Turkish evidentiary suffix *-miş* in *The Idiot*, a narrative device that denotes reported or inferred knowledge rather than anything actually observed. As Selin reflects, "different languages force you to think about different things" (Batuman, 2017), a feeling that is consistent with recent cognitive studies pointing to the existence of habitual patterns of language that may indirectly direct attention, memory, and reasoning (Lucy, 1992). Evidentiality in narrative (Chafe & Nichols, 1986) also sheds light on the theme of Selin being preoccupied with *miş* as an expression of a wider concern about truth, subjectivity, and the validity of personal witnessing, which is a key theme of the novel's psychological structure.

Another critical perspective through which Selin's tutoring experiences can be evaluated is the intersection of power and pedagogy in the process of second-language learning. Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is considered a classic text on how schools can recreate social stratifications with what Freire called the 'banking concept' of education, in which teachers impart knowledge to inactive students instead of actively creating knowledge through dialogue with them. This framework has been successfully applied to the ESL context, where the imposition of standard English is sometimes a form of linguistic imperialism that excludes the identity and communicative practices of non-native speakers (Pennycook, 1994; Canagarajah, 1999). In *The Idiot*, the adult education program is focused on memorizing test content to take the GED exam, as exemplified by Linda's blunt rejection of Selin's contextual teaching approach, insisting that the test book—not classroom analogies—is the only relevant authority (Batuman, 2017)—depicting the conflict between institutional ambitions and the actual realities of students. This is supported by recent studies focused on teacher power in EFL classrooms, which have shown that expert and legitimate bases of power can encourage student dependency instead of autonomy. In contrast, informational and referent bases may be more appropriate for promoting intrinsic motivation (Dianithi et al., 2020). The tension experienced by Selin in trying to reconcile her position as an institutional representative with her need to experience genuine connection with such students as Joaquín and Linda, therefore, represents larger debates concerning equity, agency and resistance in language education.

Psychonarratology is a methodology for examining the construction of character consciousness using linguistic and narrative means. The framework was first established by scholars such as Fludernik (1993, 1996), who focused on the mediation of narrative discourse on readers' access to the inner lives of characters, especially the use of free indirect discourse, stream of consciousness, and any other device that makes it difficult to distinguish between the narrator and the character (thoughts). Fludernik's idea of experientiality, which refers to the quality of storytelling that recreates the conscious experience of the protagonist, is helpful in examining Selin's psychological development because Batuman adopts a close third-person point of view that reflects Selin's linguistic preoccupations and emotional ambiguities. The fact that psychonarratological processes can be applied to modern fiction, as recently proven by psychonarratologists (Herman, 2011; Zunshine, 2006), makes this approach particularly suitable for a novel such as *The Idiot*, where Selin's linguistic training determines how she perceives and treats other people. In addition, studies of trauma and identity in literature (Caruth, 1996; LaCapra, 2001) indicate that the fragmentation of narration and linguistic stuttering might be used as formal analogs of psychological suffering, a tendency that can be traced in Selin's scenes with tutors, when the breakdown of communication indicates internal anxieties about power, intimacy, and self-definition.

Although these theoretical frameworks are rather rich, it is important to note that they do not operate in isolation: Freire's banking concept and Foucault's discourse of power together illuminate how institutional authority is reproduced through language, while Norton's investment theory and Canagarajah's code-meshing framework collectively explain the learner's psychosocial response to that authority. Psycho-narratological tools from Fludernik (1996) and Herman (2011)

provide the methodological bridge for accessing character consciousness amid these overlapping pressures. This integrated theoretical framework underpins the present analysis. In contrast, scholarship on Elif Batuman's *The Idiot* has largely focused on humor, epistolary form, and digital intimacy, with little emphasis on the linguistic psychology of the ESL tutoring subplot (Kakutani, 2017; Wood, 2017). The most common critical accounts focus on the relationship between Selin and Ivan through emails as the key relationship in the novel, examining the theme of romantic ambiguity and mediated communication (Bloom, 2018; Miller, 2019). Although these readings provide helpful insights into how Batuman is involved in the current digital culture, they tend to disregard and underestimate the way the tutoring scenes are themselves a parallel play on language, power, and psychological resistance. Pidgin expressions such as "Papel iss blonk" between Selin and Joaquin are not only a failure of pedagogy but rather a negotiation of identity and intimacy that deserves long-term theoretical consideration. Recent studies on the phenomenon of pidginization and code-meshing in education (Young, 2009; Baker-Bell, 2020) imply that linguistic hybridity in the question of pidginization and code-meshing can be viewed as a resistance against the ideology of standardized lingo; however, this has not been applied in a systematic analysis of *The Idiot*. Likewise, the discussion of linguistic relativity and psychological subjectivity in the novel has not been theorized sufficiently, considering current theories of cognitive and pedagogical systems, despite the fact that scholarship on Batuman's previous work, *The Possessed*, has studied her treatment of the Russian literary tradition (Batuman, 2010).

This gap is notable because the tutoring scenes in *The Idiot* provide a rare opportunity to explore the significance of literary narratives in revealing the psychological aspects of language acquisition and power. By incorporating the perspectives of linguistic relativity, critical pedagogy, and psycho-narratology, this study aims to prove that Selin's experiences as an ESL tutor are not an incidental feature of the novel's main interests but a key place from which one can begin to analyze the experience of the interface between language, identity, and resistance. The psychological mechanisms of second language acquisition, as recent studies of motivation and engagement in the process have highlighted (Liu et al., 2020; Alamer, 2021), are closely linked to learners' sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which Selin also experiences in terms of searching for and identifying herself amid institutional and interpersonal pressures. This analysis contributes to Batuman's scholarship and the larger discussion of how literature may make the multivariety of language, power, and psychological experiences visible.

III. METHODOLOGY

This analysis is based on the psycho-narratology of the text (Fludernik, 1993, 1996) and analyzes linguistics, psychology, and power in Elif Batuman's *The Idiot* (2017). Psycho-narratology interprets the role of narrative discourse as a mediating factor concerning access to character consciousness, which is most appropriate in the close third-person view one is more accustomed to in the example of Selin in her ESL tutoring experiences. Data collection was conducted by systematically reading passages in the Adult Education Program in Parts One and Two. To ensure analytical rigor, passages were selected according to explicit criteria: scenes were included only if they contained identifiable instances of linguistic deviation, power negotiation, or metacommentary on language use by the narrator or characters. Each passage was coded against all three analytical categories before cross-referencing, thereby reducing the interpretive circularity. The main scenes of analysis are: (1) the formation of "Papel iss blonk" with Joaquin, which displays the stage of pidginization as the deviation of a language and psychological negotiation; (2) the lesson of fractions with Linda, showing the obstacle to the conventional pedagogical language and the power relationships in general; and (3) the monologues of Selin about her failure to tutor, which demonstrates the psychological hassles of overcoming the barriers between institutional and interpersonal communication. These scenes were chosen because of the abundant language fracture, identity negotiation, and socioeconomic disparity present in them. Three complementary coding strategies were incorporated into the analytical framework. First, language analysis is applied to recognize the phenomena of pidginization, code-switching, and evidentiality, which is based on Canagarajah's (1999) work regarding the issue of resistance to linguistic imperialism with the help of hybridization. Second, influenced by trauma theory, which focuses on the late processing of emotions, psychological coding analyzes Selin's emotions, such as anger, tiredness, and intimacy, attributed to the failure of communication (Caruth, 1996). Third, the analysis of power examines socioeconomic inequalities between the privileged student Selin and the housing project students based on Freire's (1970) critique of the bank concept of education and Peirce's (1995) framework on social identity and investment in learning a second language. The combination of these strategies allows for a multidimensional analysis of how linguistic hybridity can be a means of psychological resistance to institutional limitations.

IV. DISCUSSION

A. Pidgin as Intimacy vs. Failure

The tutoring scene between Selin and Joaquin in Elif Batuman's *The Idiot* is a critical point of analysis for the psychological and linguistic processes of power under institutional restrictions. When Selin attempts to teach Joaquin, a Dominican plumber, basic English syntax, namely, the sentence The paper is white, the dialogue does not run pedagogically at all. The final form used by Joaquin, "Papel is blank," is more than a linguistic mistake; it is the birth of a pidgin that carries out the roles of intimacy and defiance (Batuman, 2017). Selin explicitly identifies this hybrid

utterance as neither standard English nor a fully formed Creole, but something in between—a pidgin born of their shared tutoring sessions (Batuman, 2017). Such linguistic hybridity establishes a secret language that essentially marginalizes the establishment of the adult education program, where memorization of the GED test rather than real communicative competence is the main order of business.

This change essentially alters Selin's role from that of a person of authority who imposes standard language to that of a co-creator of a shared linguistic code (Batuman, 2017). This can be related in the context of critical pedagogy to a call in opposition to the so-called banking concept of education, in which knowledge is stored and not built (Freire, 1970). Selin and Joaquin form a relationship that confirms Joaquin as a linguistic agent instead of correcting him to conform to the standards of the normative. Nonetheless, Selin is heavily burdened by the psychological weight of this intimacy, as she is highly conscious of her status as a Harvard student tutoring within a housing project. She privately acknowledges her complete collapse as a conventional ESL instructor (Batuman, 2017). Such a confession demonstrates a crisis of authority; she is as effective as an institutional measure, but she is unwilling to undermine it with this personal linguistic invention.

This linguistic negotiation can be described as having a psychological toll, with intense tension between guilt and connection between the parties. Selin talks of fatigue and frustration, expressing her exhaustion at having to decode messages that never plainly reach her (Batuman, 2017). This distress is due to her compromised role between the institution's requirements and the humanity of her students. This makes pidgin a defensive tool that protects both sides against the systemic malfunction of the inflexible curriculum of the program. However, it also heals Selin's loneliness, including her in a language of communication that would not be as useful in their particular dyad. Selin works through this failure in her emails to Ivan, showing the exhaustion of emotional work to bring the different worlds together. She admits that she is tired and angry that she has to interpret Joaquin's invented language, which puts stress on the interpretation. The invention of this vernacular language emphasizes how poor the standard form of English can be in bridging socioeconomic divides. This meaningful interaction is likely to emerge as a result of the failure to establish a standard form of communication, not its triumph. The Joaquin scene ultimately highlights how linguistic sidesteps can be used as a form of psychological safe zone, as it defies the colonial aspect of teaching the language but also reveals the vulnerability of the tutor in terms of authority, effectiveness, and emotional work required to mediate the gap between the two worlds. Pidgin is not only a failure of acquisition but also a successful act of mutual recognition beyond the surveillance of educational institutions.

B. Resistance to Acquisition

The tutoring of the relationship between Selin and Linda is a critical space in the study of the tension between institutional pedagogy and learner agency. In trying to explain fractions as a real-life analogy (in this case, a circle and labelling it as a pie), Selin is categorically dismissed by Linda, who rejects the pie analogy outright, asserting that the test book—not the teacher's contextual illustrations—is the only legitimate source of knowledge (Batuman, 2017). Such rejection is not only a type of cognitive block but also a form of sociopolitical resistance. Linda is aware that a pedagogical approach that Selin uses, i.e., forcing contextual meaning, is not in line with the instrumental objectives of the GED exam. This relationship illustrates the type of bank concept of education used by Freire (1970), in which students are viewed as empty vessels to which teachers deposit their knowledge. This order is interfered with by Linda, who insists on following the letter of the book and proclaims that she knows what knowledge is valuable to her in the context of her particular socioeconomic situation.

This opposition reflects Selin's psychological struggle with the triviality of her college discussions (Batuman, 2017). In the same way as Linda does not see the pie analogy as pertinent to her needs of survival and testing, Selin does not always see the decontextualized, abstract discourse of the university as a part of her own reality, as she questions why meaning never seems to reach her directly (Batuman, 2017). Both characters are in dissonance between what is being provided by the institution and their lived experiences. According to Norton (2000), language learners can engage in learning only when they feel that they have received a payoff for their investment in identity. Linda will not make an investment in the pedagogical narrative of Selin as it does not pay off in her short-term objective, which is passing the test. This results in a change in power relations; Linda is now the judge of legitimate knowledge, and the role of authority is no longer held by Selin but by a disappointed Linda.

Moreover, Linda's refusal of the pie metaphor can be interpreted using Canagarajah's (1999) model of fighting linguistic imperialism: Linda denies the cultural assumptions of the pedagogy by declining the teacher's efforts to naturalize math using domestic comparisons. She claims that the institutional language of the test book is more powerful than the communicative language of the classroom. This is in line with Foucault (1980), who states that power is experienced by the production of truth in this classroom; the truth is the test book and not what the teacher says. Pennycook (1994) states that critical pedagogy should not ignore such power relations and that teachers tend to unintentionally recreate social inequalities with the help of a standardized approach. Selin fails to fill this gap, which demonstrates the shortcomings of standard English teaching when it does not consider the agency of the learner. Finally, communication collapse shows that learning is not a neutral process of transferring skills but a contest of power in which the learner has the ability to alter the dynamics of interaction.

C. The Psychology of the Interpreter

Selin's confession about her ESL student Joaquin—"As far as teaching English goes, I've failed. I am now the interpreter of a language that only he and I can understand" (Batuman, 2017)—is a turning point of psychological change between authority and ambiguity. This incapacity to implement regular linguistic patterns reflects her identity crisis, especially in her email communication with Ivan. She is just as unable to confirm the grammatical accuracy of the phrase "Papel iss blonk" used by Joaquin as she is to confirm the truth of the emails that Ivan constantly sends to her, with coded title names or with opposing messages. This comparison implies that Selin is turned into an interpreter of ambiguity, as opposed to clarity, and that she is operating in a world where meaning is created by a mutual lack of understanding and not objective truth.

The psychological situation corresponds to Pavlenko's (2005) study, which states that bilingual individuals frequently perceive emotional processing in different languages because of the presence of more than two languages. The fight with the Turkish evidential suffix *-miş*, which identifies information as hearsay in Turkish, permeates Selin's English interactions, forming a cognitive system in which the truth is never final. Language habits, as postulated by Whorf (1956), shape the way one thinks; therefore, Selin's preoccupation with *-miş* makes her believe that uncertainty is a linguistic and existential fact. In turn, her failure as a tutor is not only pedagogical but also existential; she reproduces the *-miş* pattern in her relations with Ivan, in which nothing is ever said directly, but everything is always mediated through layers of interpretation and possible falsehood. The moral weight of this interpretation is apparent when Selin confesses her exhaustion and anger at having to decode meaning that never arrives transparently (Batuman, 2017).

Moreover, the identity crisis that Selin is going through is aggravated by what Norton (2000) defines as investment conflict. She puts her own emotions into the language developed privately with Joaquin and Ivan. However, she is not recompensed with social capital in the institutional structures of Harvard or the adult education program. Although she forms a dyadic connection with the rest of the group, her role as an interpreter alienates her from the group. The narrative discourse mediates Selin's entrance into the mind, revealing her loneliness via her internal monologues, which Fludernik (1996) calls experientiality. According to this view, Selin's perplexion is a structural part of her psychological development and not just a sign of dissatisfaction. Her own skepticism and the narrator's voice blend in her head, and she becomes engrossed in the narrative.

D. Institutional Power vs. Personal Agency

Selin's situation against the adult education program director is a pivotal point, as institutional power is directly in conflict with individual agency. The director explains socioeconomic inequality in their setup when Selin tries to quit tutoring math after a shuttle accident: "An upper-class privileged white kid, younger than you, comes to where you live and tells you, basically, 'You need to know this and this and this, and then you can be part of my society'" (Batuman, 2017). This criticism highlights the colonial nature of education, in which the power of the teacher is reliant on perceived social legitimacy and not on pedagogical competence. The director emphasized that trust cannot be instantly offered when the relations in education reproduce larger societal structures. This relationship is consistent with Freire (1970), who claimed that education, in most cases, is an oppressive mechanism that forces the worldview of the oppressor into that of the oppressed. Her affiliation with Harvard does not work to her advantage. Still, it works against her, which depicts Bourdieu's (1986) definition of cultural capital, in which institutional credentials caution people against each other instead of merging them in the classification of classes. Selin understands that her investment in the students' success is considered with suspicion because her capital comes from the same institution that the students are willing to use.

Selin withdraws into ESL tutoring, where standard language disintegration forms a secret Pidgin. Nevertheless, her mental withdrawal is not limited to the classroom; it extends further to her online communication with Ivan. In one conversation with a child and adolescent psychologist, Selin's email relationship is pathologized in a striking analogy: "This whole thing reminds me of the Unabomber... I was thinking about computers, that this is all about power and computers. That's where the power is, in the computers" (Batuman, 2017). The digital medium enables both sides to conceal their vulnerabilities; hence, the psychologist opines that the digital medium allows the parties to have an idealized relationship where both sides are not at risk of finding their vulnerabilities in the real world. He noted, "He obviously enjoys hiding. And you, too, are hiding behind the computer" (Batuman, 2017). This point can be connected to the fact that Turkle (2011) also analyses the concept of digital intimacy, in which people feel dominated by technology but empower themselves to dominate the presentation of themselves, which is frequently not as untidy as face-to-face communication. The computer becomes a locus of power, which repeats the idea of Foucault (1980) when he states that power is not just possessed, but it is also executed in the form of discursive practices and technologies. In Selin's case, the computer is the mediator of her identity, and she is able to be both present and absent.

Finally, Selin's agency is torn between these two institutional and digital realms. She is turned down by the housing project students because of her institutional power, but is attracted to Ivan through the power of digital anonymity. She has invested in these relationships in terms of Norton's (2000) theory of identity and language learning, in which learners invest in practices that will provide them with some form of payoff for their identity investment. The investment Selin makes in the tutoring program only brings frustration and claims of privilege, whereas in her emails, it brings intensive but also psychological alienation to the fore. The Unabomber analogy delineates this peril of seclusion and argues that power is derived from digital mediation at the expense of genuine human bonds. Selin's conflict is therefore not just one of teaching the English language or loving Ivan, but one of bargaining agency in institutional and technological systems, which tries to establish her role as opposed to establishing herself. The criticism of the director and the analogy of the

psychologist are united to demonstrate that Selin finds no agency again; only the structures in which she lives fail to allow this to happen, and she only moves in a world where power is imposed on her. She exercises it, which, in her understanding, she barely understands.

V. CONCLUSION

This study has shown that the pidgin created in the course of Selin's ESL tutoring sessions in Elif Batuman's *The Idiot* is a multifaceted psychological negotiation, as opposed to a pedagogical failure. The discussion based on psycho-narratology and critical pedagogy aspects shows that linguistic hybridity is a defence mechanism against institutionalized power. Education, as presented by Freire (1970), tends to recreate oppression by the so-called concept of banking; however, when Selin breaks the rules of conventional English, she allows an opportunity to establish genuine contact that breaks the given pattern. The results show that language learning in the novel does not pertain to grammatical correctness but to negotiating power, identity, and psychological safety. The invention of such expressions as "Papel iss blank" is not a learning failure but the successful engagement of mutual recognition, which lies beyond the surveillant gaze of the educational institution.

Selin confesses that she was a failed teacher and a winner as a self-appointed interpreter of a private code shared only between herself and Joaquin (Batuman, 2017), which is a turning point in her mental growth. This change is in line with Norton's (2000) theory of investment, which proposes that learners will be willing to invest in language practices that provide them with a payoff in terms of their identity. In Selin's case, the payoff is intimacy and not institutional validation. The pidgin questions the colonial process of language teaching and indicates that effective interaction is usually achieved through the loss of conventional communication. This is echoed by Canagarajah (1999), who claims that the solution to linguistic imperialism is code-meshing, so that practices of hybrid languages serve as a point of resistance. The fact that Selin also accepts ambiguity as opposed to clarity is indicative of her greater existential dilemma with the Turkish evidential suffix *-miş* and the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Whorf, 1956). She shifts away from Chomskian grammatical yearning to Whorfian language relativity and argues that identity is made through the negotiated flux of meaning and not unalterable truths.

The consequences of this work extend beyond the tutoring subplots. Further study is necessary on the effect of Selin's major in linguistics on her love life, especially her online communication with Ivan. Similarities can be drawn between the vernacular language developed with Joaquín and the secretive language of her emails. These two relationships are based on a common code that does not involve external validation. The emails defend Selin and Ivan against the weaknesses of in-person communication, similar to the psychologist's analogy of the Unabomber that digital power is more powerful than in-person communication (Batuman, 2017). Based on Pavlenko's (2005) research on the impact of emotions and multilingualism, future research might examine how being bilingual influences the way Selin processes emotions in pedagogical and romantic contexts. In particular, studying the impact of the *-miş* tense on her perception of Ivan as a sincere individual could help identify additional links between her linguistic education and her ability to relate to others in terms of intimacy.

Finally, *The Idiot* suggests that learning a language is an exceptionally individual process connected with power and closeness. Selin's journey through the spheres of authority and interpretation demonstrates that real communication is frequently hidden between words. This way of accepting the indecision of "Papel is blank" allows Selin to build an identity not based on established truths but on the psychological negotiation of meaning itself. This redefines resistance as the subversive activity of finding common ground in an unfavorable reality rather than an aggressive revolt. According to Batuman, the incapacity of conventional language to bridge the existing divides between individuals is not a flaw but rather an opportunity for an even more authentic, if fractured, human interaction. By managing the complexities of power, identity, and psychological safety, Selin developed her own voice. In summary, this study makes three interrelated contributions: (1) it extends psycho-narratological methodology to the analysis of pedagogical failure in contemporary fiction; (2) it demonstrates that pidginization in literary narratives can function as both a linguistic and psychological resistance strategy; and (3) it repositions the ESL tutoring subplot of *The Idiot* as a theoretically significant site for examining the intersections of power, identity, and language acquisition. For practitioners, these findings suggest that moments of communicative breakdown in the classroom are not merely obstacles but potential openings for genuine relational engagement that standardised curricula tend to foreclose.

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