

# Multimodal Narrative Practices in Adult ESL: Negotiating Linguicism and Developing Language

Mahmuda Sharmin  
Emory University, Atlanta, GA, USA

**Abstract**—Multimodal pedagogies and narrative practices in the language classroom have been found effective in facilitating adult English language learning and the development of learners' identity (Crandall, 2018). Further, racism and linguicism are aspects of adult learners' lives that affect learners' learning trajectories (Corona & Block, 2020). Few studies, however, examined how multimodal narrative practices in the classroom can allow adult language learners space to negotiate linguicism and become legitimate members of the target community. This study investigated the role of narrative practices in negotiating linguicism and developing language. The study was conducted in a beginning intermediate ESL class in the Mid-south, USA. The class comprised five immigrant women participating in a multimodal narrative-based language teaching approach designed by the instructor. The learners each wrote ten multimodal narratives in a shared Google Docs over the period of 10 weeks about their English-speaking experiences and retold those narratives in the classroom. The findings showed that multimodal narrative practices not only facilitated language development but also helped learners negotiate racism and shape identity.

**Index Terms**—multimodal narratives, racism and linguicism, language learning, and investment

## I. INTRODUCTION

In discussing classroom pedagogies, multimodal pedagogy and narrative practices in the language classroom were found to be fruitful in fostering ESL learning and exploring learners' identity and agency (Crandall, 2018). Learners may not fully invest in the language practice (Norton, 2015) since the practice might "position them as inadequate, incapable, or unworthy" (Darvin, 2019, p. 245) and the investment in a target language is "contingent on the negotiation of power" (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p.37). Learners invest in language learning with the understanding of acquiring symbolic (language and friendship) and material resources (job and money) (Norton, 2015). Moreover, learners often experience racial microaggression (Corona & Block, 2020) and linguistic racism (Dovchin, 2019) both inside and outside of the classroom because of their color, race, and the way they use language. Multimodal narrative practices in the adult language classroom; however, have received relatively little attention to identify its implication in negotiating linguicism that learners face in the dominant community. The current study focuses on multimodal narratives in which adult immigrant women talked about their everyday experiences of using English that included social inequity and linguicism. Furthermore, facing linguicism impact the learners' investment in language learning which is different from the learners' motivation to learn or practice language.

Investment refers to the learners' commitment to the goal and willingness or desire to learn the language and engage themselves in the language learning process (Norton, 2013). The extent to which learners invest in language learning depends on the negotiations of power between interlocutors (Darvin, 2020). The existing dynamic of social power might affect the learners' access to the dominant community and the situation under which learners speak. A person who is in the position of power serves as a gatekeeper of a context; therefore, the person who is not in the power of position must negotiate the imposed linguistic norms given by the host nationals. Immigrant learners tend to endure cognitive pressure during speaking in English both in institutional and noninstitutional settings as they frequently face implicit and explicit linguicism (Dovchin, 2019). Now the question is how immigrant language learners can become aware of the existing racism and feel confident in negotiating linguicism. It is the responsibility of the educators to help immigrant learners become aware of the existing social discrimination and help them negotiate linguicism to become legitimate members of the community. Very little studies have focused on adult language classrooms that can work as a platform with the aim of helping learners understand linguicism and how to negotiate social inequity.

I will frame the paper within a discussion of linguicism which refers to ideologies or actions that violate human rights based on the way people use language (Dovchin, 2019). Linguicism is something which is experienced by many speakers of different identities for varied reasons that are often related to social power structures. For example, race, gender, ethnicity, social class gap, and the way people use language are the main reasons for facing linguicism. In explaining linguicism, scholar Dovchin (2020) added two new dimensions- 'ethnic accent bullying' and 'linguistic stereotyping'. Ethnic accent bullying can be defined as making fun of one's usage of language or accents, while linguistic stereotyping can be classified as people expected to have less proficiency in English and not to speak well

because of how they racially and ethnically look. Additionally, language learners often face preconceived notions about their language proficiency, which further clarifies that language is not judged in separation from the speakers. Moreover, the existing English language ideology places native speakers of English in a position of power. On the contrary, English language learners have lacked this power. Thus, one of the jobs for teachers in the language classroom is to equip students to negotiate linguisticism as they are building language skills for the real world. It is classroom responsibilities to create students' democratic spirit that will allow learners to discuss texts or real-life situations in relation to racial equalities, identities, forms of justice and injustice, bias and oppression, and human rights. This type of classroom practice can help learners use their voice and agency to make a positive difference in the world. Keeping that in mind, this study looks at ways in which multimodal narratives can be used to promote discussion in the classroom, develop language, build identity, and challenge linguisticism. This study has developed the following research questions to identify the role of multimodal narrative practices in adult ESL classrooms in developing language, identifying identities, and negotiating linguisticism.

1. How can multimodal narrative practice help adult language learners develop language through investment?
2. How can multimodal narrative practice help immigrant adult language learners negotiate difficult experiences outside the classroom?

## II. MULTIMODALITY AND NARRATIVE IN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Recently, multimodality gained prominence and attention by language classrooms and educators. The language classroom went beyond the boundary of using communicative language teaching methods (CLT) which failed to prepare L2 learners for the complex world as the method allowed learners to acquire only a limited number of words and grammatical forms (Zapata & Ribota, 2021) and failed to provide space for critical thinking. Multimodal pedagogy and narrative practices have been widely used in the language classroom since they helped reveal learners' lived experiences and identify learners' fluid identities. Prior studies noticed that storytelling in a digital tool can enhance learners' motivation to use the language both inside and outside the classroom (Reinders, 2011). Most studies on classroom pedagogies found that web-based language teaching, digital storytelling, and multimodal literacy foster language learning and help immigrant learners construct identities (Zakaria et al., 2016). They found that 'story bird' worked as a pedagogical tool in teaching language and had a positive impact on language learning as it helped learners produce narrative texts. By implementing a narrative approach in the classroom, teachers can understand who their learners are, what their relationship is with the world (Burner, 1990). Moreover, Bamberg and Georgeakopoulou (2008) suggest that analyzing short narratives that include everyday conversation helps identify the identity of the narrators and how participants navigate their contradictory identities. Wortham (2006) found that analyzing short narratives about interactions not only helped understand the events of the narrative but also helped identify what narrators did during the interaction. Additionally, Crandall's (2018) study suggested that teachers would find more positive results if they implemented life-based writing instead of merely preparing learners for the exam.

Multimodality, which was originally introduced by the New London Group (1996), is a communication practice that includes textual, aural, linguistics, spatial, and visual modes to convey a message. Scholars such as Somerville & D'warte (2014) have noticed learners felt enthusiastic when they used multiple modes for sharing their everyday experiences of using the English language. Miller et al. (2017) conducted a study on English language learners to see whether participating in the multimodal and dual-language identity text intervention fosters the length of discourse and lexical variations when they tell stories. The result showed that participants' vocabulary skill improved in terms of numbers and variations. In addition to that Veum et al. (2021) also noticed that immigrant learners constructed spatial identity, relational identity, and functional identity by using linguistic and visual resources. Most studies emphasized pedagogical approaches for exploring learners' complex shifting identities. Learners' identities are shaped by their investment in the target community which is a site of struggle since they wrestle with existing social inequity. Very few studies have not examined multimodal narrative practices that would allow adult language learners space to negotiate linguisticism.

## III. LINGUISTICISM AND RACISM

Linguicism refers to beliefs or ideologies that discriminate against human beings based on language. This ideology regulates the unequal division of power between people based on how an individual uses language; therefore, such ideology blocks learners' entry into the external community since learners remain under pressure when they speak and face discrimination because of their language, color, and race. Corona and Block (2020) noticed that language learners experienced racial microaggression by their teachers because of their color, race, and language. Both institutional and noninstitutional settings are considered sites of struggle for language learners given that learners fail to convey and discuss complex ideas when they are in the classroom setting (Dobinson & Mercieca, 2020) and learners are forced to accept the linguistics norms given by the gatekeepers when they are in a noninstitutional setting. If the classroom practices position learners as unworthy, inadequate, or incapable (Darvin, 2019), they would not position themselves as valued members in the context where they face discrimination. For example, in the Mongolian context, a minority ethnic group was often discriminated against because of having 'broken Mongolian' and speakers of the ethnic group

had to negotiate to the linguistic norms set by the educational institute (Dovchin, 2019). The situation becomes more complex when learners' first language is not English; therefore, immigrant language learners endure more discrimination.

Experiencing linguisticism made the learners feel that they were not legitimate members of the target community. Learners' legitimacy in the target community is important because language learners always want to be accepted by the host nationals. Learners' rejection by the people of the target community affects their investment in language learning. Jean-Pierre (2018) found that Quebec English speakers experienced discrimination and were considered illegitimate members of the Quebec community because of having power difference between Anglophones and Francophones. The unequal power differences made Quebec English speakers outsiders in the community. Immigrant language learners even endure more discrimination not only because of their accent but also for their race and ethnicity. For instance, Asian learners are often mocked by the peers of the target community because of their 'broken' and 'Ching-Chong English' (Chun, 2016). Such discrimination deteriorates learners' sense of belonging in the community. Multilingual learners' shuttle between different languages that is not considered their asset, rather it is seen as their liability (Wei, 2018). While a few studies have examined how multimodal narrative practices in L2 classrooms can allow adult L2 learners space to negotiate linguisticism to become legitimate members of the target community, this study investigates the role of multimodal narrative practices in negotiating difficult experiences that immigrant adult language learners face in their subsequent investments in language learning.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is an appropriate lens to understand the immigrant language learners' experiences since the theory advocates historically marginalized people's experiential knowledge (Charles, 2019). CRT emphasizes two important aspects: "Whiteness as property"- jobs are reserved for white native English speakers; and "permanence of racism"- hierarchical structure in which Whites considered ideal and authentic. Immigrant people are historically marginalized because of their race, color, and language; thus, learners' experiences need to be analyzed with the lens of CRT since one of the principles of CRT is the commitment to social justice. CRT sets three goals which include stories of marginalized people, race analysis, and other hindering factors. CRT would help understand and analyze the ideology, hierarchical structure or class power in the dominant society, and immigrant learners' real-life experiences. The study also used narrative analyses to analyze adult language learners' narratives that they produced. Narrative and Identity often go together since the narrative is considered a primary vehicle to understand who the narrator is.

#### IV. METHODS

##### A. Participants

Five immigrant adult language learners whose language proficiency was beginner level participated in this study. All of them enrolled in the 'Speaking well in the U.S.' course which aimed to prepare learners to speak well. The age range of the participants is between 25 to 48 years. Three participants were from Brazil and two of them were from Venezuela. The length of their residence in the U.S. was from 2 weeks to 10 years. Only one participant who was 48 years old had been living in the USA for ten years. The rest of them had been living here for a short period of time. Three of them have not taken any English language courses in the USA before. Two of them took different English language courses before taking the 'Speaking well in the US' course. Pseudonyms were used to protect the participants' confidentiality in accordance with IRB (Institutional Review Board) protocol. Table 1 shows participants' pseudonyms, length of residency, and age range during data collection.

TABLE 1  
PARTICIPANTS' DATA

Participants	Length of Residence in USA	Language Course Taken	Age	From
Molly	2 weeks	First time	32	Brazil
Amy	1 year	First time	28	Brazil
Camelia	10 years	Not first time	48	Brazil
Genia	10 months	First time	35	Venezuela
Arena	4 years	Not first time	25	Venezuela

##### B. Data Collection

The study relied on qualitative research and took a qualitative ethnographic approach. In addition, the study employed action research that refers to a "form of self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situation in which the practices are carried out" (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p.162). For finding the answers to the research questions, learners' multimodal narratives about using English in their daily lives, and oral reflection of their narratives were collected.

Learners were asked to write one multimodal narrative story per week about their experiences of using English by using a shared Google document. The prompt of the narrative was adapted from Norton's (2012) study and was optimized. The writing prompt was modified based on learners' needs and the study's purpose. The prompt asked learners to write about their experiences of using English in their daily lives and add relevant images or videos. Since learners wrote their narratives in the shared Google doc, everyone had access to their and peers' narratives. Learners were asked to:

"Write down a narrative about your experiences of using English this week. Focus on one specific event. When did you use English this week? Whom did you speak English to? What did you say? How did you feel about your own English? Tell us in detail and add any pictures or videos or any relevant information". (Writing Prompt)

Learners were also required to retell and reflect on their stories in the classroom. Five narrative reflection sessions were video recorded. During the reflection session, I pulled up the google doc in the projector where all learners could visually see the multimodal narratives. During reflecting on the narratives in the classroom, learners were asked to explain the photo mode that they used in their written narratives. Learners shared the reasons for choosing specific photos, the relation between the photo mode and the narratives, and introduced the characters, places, or objects in the photos.

### C. Data Analysis

For analyzing data, NVivo 12 plus, which is computer assisted qualitative data analysis software, was used. Interview data were transcribed and coded for finding learners' ideology about language and their initial desire to practice the language. Learners' written multimodal narrative was coded in finding learners' range of investment that means how desired learners were to learn English. Written narratives also helped find how learners constructed their images, how they shaped identity, how learners positioned themselves, and were positioned by others. After coding learners' written narratives, the photo mode was analyzed based on Van Leeuwen's (2008) theories of multimodal critical discourse analysis. Leeuwen's theories helped analyze the possible meanings of identity that learners presented in multimodal text. In terms of identity in multimodal text, Van Leeuwen categorized three different identity types, "Spatial identity", 'Relational Identity', and 'Functional Identity'. This study analyzed 'who or 'what' was represented in the images and how learners constructed themselves in the images.

## V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Learners' narrative writing about experiences of using English and reflection on the narrative in the classroom suggest how racism and linguicism become part of the conversation that learners face periodically in various circumstances. Oral reflection and classroom discussion on the multimodal narrative helped learners become aware of the social problems and understand their inner resources, which are essential for multilingual learners in combatting social injustice. Learners' written narrative, photo modes that they used, and oral reflection portrayed both visible and invisible linguicism that they encountered in different contexts. In this study, Molly, Genia, Arena, and Camelia had to experience a certain type of discourse that made them feel excluded in the community. Moreover, Arena experienced explicit racism because of the way she used language. Like all other participants, Camelia felt marginalized when she had a conversation with the person who had the position of power. However, discussing learners' experiences in the classroom helped them recognize the pattern of linguicism, the ways of negotiating linguicism, and the ways of becoming an integral part of the target community.

### A. Multilingual Learners Shuttle between Different Languages

People from various races face linguicism or linguistic racism when they are unable to speak English "properly," and they are considered less intelligent because of their "broken English". As I mentioned above that Molly, who had been living in the USA for three months during collecting data, tried to utilize all possible opportunities that she had for practicing English and used metacognitive strategy to develop her language learning. Molly managed a job as an assistant teacher at a church school where she felt welcomed by her colleagues; however, her students did not receive her warmly because of the way she pronounced English.

Excerpt: 1

*'Why Your English is So Funny'*

M: As everyone know this week, I started my work. I am assistant teacher...For me it is very important because umm not money because my pay. I pay very little. But I practice English. Speak with the kid is very easy for me. I like speak with the kids. I am very happy because people in the US my family in the US speak to me O you teacher you job in Brazil in school but not in the US is not possible. You not teacher here...

T: How did you feel?

M: I am very happy. I can practice English. In the picture you can see my colleagues and boss. My supervisor is not here. But I talk to my supervisor all day and she talk my job umm my responsibility...

T: Okay. Did you face any incident that hurt you?

M: No, in fact they are very receptive (respectful). **Only once did a student ask me why my English was funny and a teacher quickly said: This is because she speaks two different languages and that leaves her with a different structure, but the important thing is that you understand her** "That is, they always tell me respect.



Figure 1: Molly-Reflection on Narrative in Class, August 14<sup>th</sup>

In this context, Molly was ridiculed by one of her students who described her English as 'funny'. If we interpret the word 'funny', it can be something to laugh at or something that sounds strange and different. By saying the word 'funny', the student might want to mean that Molly's English was different from the norms, or it sounded something to laugh at. Molly's experience echoed Dovchin's (2019) study that showed a minority ethnic group was often discriminated against because of having 'broken Mongolian'; language speakers of the ethnic group had to negotiate the linguistic norms set by the educational institute and workplace. Moreover, Asian learners are often mocked by the peers of the target community because of their 'broken' and 'Ching-Chong English' (Chun, 2016). If we delve into the word 'funny English' that Molly's student mentioned, we find that it promotes the 'permanence of racism', that conveys a hierarchical structure in which 'Whites are considered ideal and authentic' and the norms that English language speakers follow are treated as standard and authentic. In the case of English, standard language ideology, which is an inherent part of political agenda, has been perpetuated through social, political, and economic forces in the USA for hundreds of years (Lippi-Green, 2012). English language speakers who are often white, have long since maintained this ideology. In this context, by saying the word 'funny English', the student wanted to prove that Molly's English deviated from the rules that English language speakers follow. This is one of the examples that show how people from immigrant backgrounds face linguicism in their everyday life and how human beings' fundamental rights are violated by expecting a discourse of appropriateness. However, Molly's reflection of her narrative in the classroom also disclosed English speakers' growing changing attitudes towards linguistically marginalized people.

When the student said why Molly's English is funny, Molly immediately received a response from her colleague, who said that "this is because she speaks two different languages and that leaves her with a different structure, but the important thing is that you understand her". It is very important to note that by saying the above statement, Molly's colleague is inviting change in existing social injustice. The statement also reveals that multilingual learners shuttle between different languages or variation of languages which is often considered their liabilities rather than their resources (Wei, 2018). In this context, Molly's colleague acknowledged Molly's English since her English was comprehensible, no matter how deviated her English was from the norms that the English speakers follow. By doing so, the colleague is not only challenging the dominant ideology but also critiquing the rules of appropriateness-based approaches to language diversity in education (Flores & Rosa, 2015). The statement suggests that focus needs to be placed on how comprehensible the language is but not on how closely people follow supposed rules of appropriateness or on perceiving multilingual learners' language use in a racialized way. It is also important to note that the statement promotes Critical Race Theory (CRT) that invites change in existing social injustice. In addition to that, Critical Race Theory is an appropriate lens to understand the immigrant language learners' experiences since the theory advocates historically marginalized people's experiential knowledge (Charles, 2019).

Moreover, considerable attention needs to be paid to the statement "this is because she speaks two different languages...but the important thing is that you understand her" from different angles. The statement suggests that understanding is the key point, but the question is whether this response really celebrates the differences and promotes tolerance and understanding, or simply seeks to excuse it. Eventually, we need to consider the difference between intelligibility and acceptability that refer to the capability of being understood and the quality of being tolerated or allowed. Meanwhile, 'understanding' the language and 'accepting' the language have two different dimensions that might provoke thinking about language deficiencies or hierarchical dichotomies of language proficiency. It is worth noting that Molly heard negative criticism regarding her language only once which means she felt valued at her workplace most of the time. Rather than seeing multilingual learners' language as deficit, native speakers of English should see it as critical resources to be affirmed and valued. Talking about Molly's experience in the classroom not only

helped other learners understand their inner resources but also helped them realize how to negotiate challenging situations in the future.

Moreover, Molly's reflection on her narrative in the classroom helped all learners recognize their multilingual identities. Molly's identity is initially shaped by dominant ideology which is defined as "dominant ways of thinking that organize and stabilize societies while simultaneously determining modes of inclusion and exclusion" (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p.18). Molly's student primarily did not see her English as acceptable that represented English speakers' ideology about what is good, bad, acceptable, or unacceptable (De Fina, 2003). However, Molly's colleague recognized her English as being acceptable since her English was comprehensible. As a researcher, I noticed how different ideologies shaped Molly's identities in different ways, for example, Molly's professional identity was her 'achieved' identity which means 'teacher identity'; however, this identity is questioned by her student and transformed into an 'imposed identity', 'that is illegal speaker of English', which implies how others see her (Hu, 2018). Finally, her 'imposed identity' was modified and newly shaped as 'multilingual identity' by her colleague's ideology. In this context, Molly's identity possesses different layers like an onion and became fluid (Darvin & Norton, 2015). In the above narrative, Molly focused on her job which is one of her great achievements. As a researcher, I understood that having a job in a target society is part of the language learning process. Language learners come to the language classroom intending to acquire symbolic and material resources (learning a language, making friendships, managing jobs, etc.) At this stage, Molly acquired both symbolic resources and material resources. This new job shifted her identity from a language learner to a teacher.

### B. Multilingual Learners Do Not Belong to USA

Like Molly, Genia, who was from Venezuela and came to the USA only ten months before when I started collecting data, was discriminated against, and insulted in various ways based on how she spoke in English. Genia talked about her experience in one of her narratives in which she focused on her conversation with a cashier who insulted her since she was an immigrant. She said:

Excerpt: 2

*I do not Speak Spanish. I am American*

**My problem was to return the liter that was not used.**  
**Me: please I want to return this oil.**  
**Cashier: what? I do not understand**  
**Me: I need to return the oil**  
**Cashier: in cash or on the card with which I pay**  
**Me: what?? My english is small**  
**Cashier: he laughed telling me in cash or on the card**  
**Me: I kept telling him I need to return the oil.**  
**Cashier: I look for his cell phone and with the translator he told me that if the return was in cash or on the card?**  
**Me: ok, I understood cash, please, but I could speak more slowly in the next time and not laugh that I don't understand his speech so quickly.**  
**Cashier: Excuse me, I don't speak Spanish, I'm American.**  
**I felt frustration because I did not understand him but he was not kind to me.**



Figure 2: Genia Multimodal Narrative Writing, Sept 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Genia experienced linguisticism because of her ethnicity, broken English, and having a particular type of accent. She went to a store where she noticed the existing social power. The cashier considered himself superior in society since he knew how to speak English. When Genia did not understand the cashier, she said her "English was small," which sounded funny to the cashier as he started laughing. By adding the photo, that Genia collected online, she tried to show the cashier's laughing face which portrayed a clear insult. Although the photo mode shows he is a person of color, he makes it clear that he is from the dominant culture by saying "Excuse me, I do not speak Spanish. I am American". Immigrant people are frequently derided by the people who are from the dominant community because of their accent or having broken English. This finding is also echoed by prior studies, such as, Dovchin's (2019) study, which found that a young Mongolian immigrant girl was mocked by her peers because of having a Russian accent in her English.

The cashier considered himself superior as he was an American and knew how to speak in English, which means he had the *symbolic* and *capital* resources that made him feel superior: 'Excuse me, I do not speak Spanish. I'm American'. By saying the words 'I and American,' the cashier proved his American identity and high status in society. At the same time, he tried to distinguish his American identity from an immigrant identity: 'I do not speak Spanish. I'm American'. He wanted to mean that Americans speak English, and if anyone does not speak English, he does not belong to the USA. Like Molly's student's statement 'why your English is funny', the cashier's statement 'I am American' also explicitly invoked racial discrimination that hurts Genia's feelings: 'I felt frustration (frustrated) because I did not understand him, but he was not kind to me.' In this statement, the word 'not kind' indicates that the cashier's behavior was offensively impolite; that happened because of the way Genia used English. Here the person portrayed an uneven and unequal linguistic power between language users as the cashier directly attacked Genia's feelings based on how she spoke. Like Molly, Genia was distinguished because of her race and language since she was shuttling between Spanish, and English and her translanguaging ability was not considered her asset (Wei, 2018); instead, it was considered her lacking.

Facing challenging situations can obstruct learners' investment in learning language or can ruin learners' desire to practice language further. The above-mentioned statement indicates how Genia wanted to negotiate an unwanted situation. Although Genia was in her initial stage of learning, she portrayed her agency in negotiating meaning. It is also worth noting that although Genia faced direct discrimination that made her feel excluded from the community, she raised her voice by saying "speak more slowly in the next time and (do) not laugh that I do not understand". This statement demonstrates that Genia was aware of her rights to be heard and her rights to speak. Mostly, immigrant language learners remain silent, not by their choice, as they are afraid of being treated as outsiders and excluded from the community. However, in this context, Genia chose not to remain silent, which is a sign of her courage that immigrant language learners are aiming for.

Genia's multimodal narrative revealed her experience of linguisticism and the way she negotiated the meaning. The reflection on the narrative in the classroom helped learners become aware of their own rights and the strategy to find a way over an obstacle path. For instance, discussing how to negotiate linguisticism in the classroom assisted Arena in negotiating linguisticism in her workplace later. Arena talked about her experiences as an Uber driver in one of her narratives.

### C. *Immigrants Will Never Melt into White Americanness*

Arena, who was from Venezuela and was 25 years old, used to work at a Mexican restaurant where most of her customers were Mexican. One of Arena's multimodal narratives was about her experiences of facing linguisticism as an Uber (taxi) driver which was her part-time profession. When she reflected on the story in the classroom, she not only explained her experiences as an Uber driver but also informed how she was criticized by an American because of her language.

Excerpt: 3

*What are You Doing in this Country if You Don't Speak English?*

T: So, Arena in your story you mentioned that sometimes you worked as a Uber driver. Right?

A: When I am free, sometimes I drive Uber because I like that. I like drive. So, one customer asked me hey where are you from? Because he listened my accent when I said how are you. He said where you are from. I said I am from Venezuela. Oh good. He said. I said I do not speak English. My English is horrible. Then he said no your English is better than my Spanish...

T: How did you feel speaking with an American?

A: Good. I feel good. Sometimes I feel shy when people do not understand. I am in silent for the speak but for the good people I can speak more. I felt comfortable with him to speak. But sometimes **I feel afraid when the people make fun of me. You know. I remember one day when one person I do not remember his name. He told me hey hmm what are you umm what are you doing in this country if you don't if you don't speak English.**

T: Oh, my goodness!

A: Uhm. Yah. I felt very sad. Okay. But I said **do you speak other language?** Because I am trying to learn other language. Spanish is my first language. **Do you speak Spanish?** At that moment, I felt terrible. I need to speak English right now. Because **When I speak English, I feel need freedom.** Yes. I think this is a process. Now this class is motivation for me. I need to communicate with you in English. In my work too. I think I have I have been a grow. For example, if people tell me about my

pronunciation about my grammar it is difficult for me. I am trying every day. This is the important point.

T: I mean this country is open for everyone. Was he an English speaker or from a different country?

A: No, He is American. American people.

(Classroom Reflection, September 2<sup>nd</sup>)

The above excerpt demonstrates the ongoing prejudice and discrimination that block the mobility of immigrants in society. Arena clearly stated that ‘she feels afraid when people made fun of her’ which proves that immigrant learners frequently face criticisms that make them feel insecure. It is very important to mention here that the person’s statement “What are you doing in this country if you don’t speak English” shows hegemonic ideology about immigrants as the person takes part in reinforcing power structures willingly and denotes the dominance or authority of one group over another. Moreover, the above-mentioned statement is reminding us of Rosa’s finding that immigrants or Latinos will never melt into White Americanness and will remain separate and an outsider from White Americanness (2016). Like Genia, in this context, Arena also heard the question about her belongingness that is determined by the dominant group based on the language proficiency. The statement is a clear example of overt discrimination as it illustrates that if a person does not know English, she has no right to be a part of this country. This hegemonic ideology is responsible for keeping immigrants in disfranchised groups and in making them historically marginalized. Additionally, the statement reflects that the language learners are not authentic speakers of English; thus, they are not considered legitimate members of this country.

It is noteworthy that Arena demonstrated the knowledge, that she acquired from Molly’s reflection and classroom discussion, in the real-life context: “do you speak other language; I am trying to learn other language. Spanish is my first language. Do you speak Spanish?”. These statements essentially portrayed Arena’s awareness of inner resources that enhanced her confidence to speak up for the first time against the existing social inequities. Without being afraid, this time, Arena gathered the courage to ask a counter-question with the aim of changing the ongoing social injustice. Like Molly’s colleague, who believed that it is important to focus on the comprehensibility of the language rather than focusing on how perfectly a person is following the given norms set by the dominant community, Genia also raised her voice against social discrimination.

It is also important to recall how Molly’s colleague recognized Molly’s multilingual identity when her student asked why Molly’s English sounded funny. In this context, learners’ narrative writing and narrative reflection helped other learners understand what challenges language learners may face, how they negotiated the challenges, and how to utilize that knowledge in various contexts of their real-life situations. Arena’s statement “now this class is a motivation for me” indicates how the classroom practice helped invest in language learning and understand how to negotiate racism and linguicism in real life. Talking about familiar stories helped language learners use and practice the language in natural and realistic settings (Ghareeb & Alwehebi, 2021).

However, when comparing the above results with those of our older studies, it must be pointed out that ‘natural language learning’ does not always ensure language learning if “natural language learning is frequently marked by inequitable relations of power in which language learners struggle for getting access to social networks” (Norton, 2013, p.149). Investment in language learning mostly depends on the situation in which learners can practice English in a safe and supportive environment. The situation that Camelia faced in her child’s school was very similar to Molly, Genia, and Arenas’ experiences. Camelia had been living in the USA for ten years but rarely had access to the people of the host community as the outside world was mostly hostile and uninviting for her. For instance, in one of her narratives, she said-

Excerpt: 4

*I Felt Frustrated*

“They don’t know that I’m Latin and I don’t understand English, use my children as translators, but notice that the secretary doesn’t like me not to understand. I asked him to speak more slowly. I felt frustrated not to understand him”

they don't know that I'm Latin and I don't understand English, use my children as translators,  
but notice that the secretary doesn't like me not to understand.

Kami



I asked him to speak more slowly, that my English was small. I felt frustrated for not understand

Figure 3: Camelia’s Multimodal Narrative Writing, Aug. 18<sup>th</sup>



Previous studies have also noticed that native speakers of English are impatient with the immigrants and are not eager to negotiate meaning with them (Norton, 2012). When language learners find such situations, they can stop investing in language learning and lose their motivation as with some of the participants in Norton's study. Therefore, despite being highly motivated, there were some unwanted situations under which Camelia felt uncomfortable speaking in the target community. In the above excerpt, Camelia used two Internet memes in which the first one features a man of color who stared at the audience with the caption "What?!" and the second one shows the text "I do not understand". The implied meaning that Camelia wanted to present through using Internet memes was the attitudes that the people, who are in a position of power, have toward immigrants. The meme that she used carries typical racial stereotypes against a minority group of people like Mexican and Asians (Yoon, 2016). Although Camelia used a photo of a man of color who could potentially be interpreted as a Spanish speaker, her pronoun choice 'they' in the sentence 'they do not know that I'm Latin' demonstrates that the person does not belong to her community. The pronoun 'they' usually refers to 'other' who are not from the same group of community. Moreover, the photo mode also reflects the person's confused look that does not happen often. Using the internet memes, Camelia wanted to present how she felt when she understood that the school secretary did not like her since she did not understand his English. In this context, the meme with the man who stared at the audience with the caption 'what?!' depicted how immigrants face questions about their legitimacy because of their race, color, or language. Discrimination can be both verbal and nonverbal by which one can attack people based on their color and the way they use language (Corona & Block, 2020). Camelia felt disappointed as the person did not like her lack of understanding of English. It seems the person's weird gesture positioned Camelia as an "illegal immigrant" in the U.S where immigrants are often stereotyped in different ways like "illegal immigrants", "forever foreigner", and "model minority" etc. (Reyes, 2016). Using photo mode in the narrative writing not only helped Camelia talk about the real event in the classroom but also helped the learners understand what type of challenges a language learner might go through. It is also important to mention here that talking about the photo mode that reflects the person's weird face also denotes that a comfortable environment is essential for immigrant language learners in ensuring learners' desire to practice English as well as successful conversation.

## VI. CONCLUSION

In sum, the above examples show how immigrant language learners are judged in different contexts like at their work, child's school, and shopping stores. The multimodal narrative writing and reflection on the narratives revealed how immigrant language learners are discriminated against, for instance, immigrant learners are often criticized because of their accent or multilingual identity that is not considered their asset. In most of the above-mentioned circumstances, language learners felt that they would never melt into American Whiteness as the student criticized Molly's English, the person in the store questioned about Genia's belongingness, the person in the workplace criticized Arena's presence in the USA, and the school superintendent did not like Camelia's lack of understanding. However, Molly's colleague is advocating for social justice by stating that it is important whether we understand a person's speech or not; however, it is not significant to observe whether a person's accent is close to the norms set by the English speakers who are considered gatekeepers. The statement would likely provide strong contributions to understanding the rights of multilingual learners. Being multilingual learners, they have the right to be heard, the right to speak, and the right not to be criticized. Multimodal narrative writing about learners' everyday experiences and reflection on the narratives specifically helped learners understand how to negotiate existing racism and linguisticism in real-life situations as learners face multiple challenges in the dominant society. The present study reveals that dominant ideology often determines the legitimacy of minority people and questions their belongingness in the dominant society. The findings of the current study urge that using a certain type of language is not just about the medium of communication; rather it is related to promoting social justice and presenting a person's identity. Therefore, language classrooms should include minority learners' experiences of interactions with the people of the dominant culture.

As we have noticed above that language learners' desire to learn the language or learners' investment depends on the dynamic negotiation of power, the current study supports extending antiracist practices in the language classroom to help foster learners' understanding of racism and linguisticism by addressing challenges that learners face outside the classroom. The current study suggests that natural language learning repeatedly blocks learners' desire to practice the language given that 'natural language learning is often marked by inequitable relations of power' (Norton, 2013, p. 149). Prior studies showed that teaching theory or grammar is not always sufficient for adult language learners to make them feel confident in interaction with the people of the target community as language learning and the social world are interrelated (Chik & Ho, 2017). Without ignoring a focus on grammar, I argue that language teachers need to help language learners understand what racism is and how to negotiate racism and linguisticism in various learning contexts. This type of classroom-based social research will help educators understand what types of challenges learners are facing in terms of practicing the language with the speakers of the English language and how learners' inner resources can help learners negotiate difficult experiences outside the classroom. Moreover, the current study shows that using photo modes in writing and talking about both linguistic and visual modes relevant to their everyday life facilitate the developing of language and social awareness as the practices help broaden learners' thinking during speaking about social injustice.

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**Mahmuda Sharmin** is a Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow in the Writing Program at Emory University. She earned two masters, one in TESOL from Southeast Missouri State University and the other in English Language in Literature from International Islamic University Chittagong Bangladesh, and a PhD in Applied Linguistics from the University of Memphis.