

Vidya Shah: (00:00:11)

Welcome to another episode of The UnLeading Podcast, Season 3. As we continue on this journey, I'm really struck by the power of not knowing and continuously being in the questions that I find myself in in this unleading space. I feel deeply that it is so much better to continuously uncover what leadership is not than to have some clearly defined version in a checklist or a rubric or an organizational document of some sort. These definitions always fall short of the realities and possibilities of leadership, understood here really broadly and fluidly, maybe conceptualized as relationships with the human and more-than-human world, maybe as networks or ecosystems or constellations, maybe even as rhizomatic structures. Formal definitions also fall short of our understandings of who a leader is or who a leader can be. And I'm thinking here about those who are in formal leadership positions, those who don't want to be in those formal positions, those who others see as leaders but don't necessarily see themselves as leaders, and those who actively resist leading and leadership. These podcast episodes are designed to help us think through what we want to undo unlearn and un be in our leadership. Today's episode on leading for linguistic justice will do just that. We will consider the ways in which narrow conceptions of language, the erasure of languages, notions of quote-unquote standard English, and accent discrimination all serve to maintain systems of white supremacy, colonialism, and ableism. We consider how our understanding of language changes our access to thinking and being in schools, in communities, and in the academy. Leading for linguistic justice involves challenging Eurocentricity and decolonizing how we speak, how we listen, how we communicate, and how we relate to one another. It celebrates the work of linguistic revitalization, especially Indigenous languages, and it engages practices like trans-linguaging that allows people to bring their full selves and identities to a space. As I think about linguistic justice, I think about how histories of colonization have distanced me from languages that are familiar to my family and ancestors: Hindi, Gujarati, Sanskrit. I think of the ways that I've tried to correct my parents' accents, and the ways in which I've tried to anglicize my own name to make it sound more palatable to a standard English-speaking ear, often following the pronunciation of my name with, it rhymes with Lydia. I recall the ways in which I've both honored and dishonored multiple languages in my K to 12 experiences and my experiences in higher education. And I also think about the ways of knowing and being that I don't have access to, or that I've lost because I don't speak my ancestral languages fluently, and the ways in which that has fundamentally shaped my experiences of culture, of humor, of desire, and possibilities for life and learning. And many of these reflections have come to me in my engagement with our panelists today, including Sonia Martin, who will be setting the stage for us. Sonia is a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Education at York University, and her doctoral inquiry is a transdisciplinary project that focuses on the connection between water and language to inform anti-colonial, anti-racist language practices for international education. Sonia is also a writer, a surfer, and a wonderful person who I've had the privilege to work with. Welcome to the podcast, Sonia.

Sonia Martin: (00:04:06)

Thank you for the introduction, Vidya. I am honored to be invited to introduce this discussion about unlearning for linguistic justice. I am also humbled to participate alongside this amazing group of panelists. I'd like to position myself a bit further to give listeners an idea of how I'm situated in the world, and then I'll share barriers to linguistic justice with a few personal anecdotes. For a more detailed overview, I invite listeners to read the essay that accompanies this episode and is posted on the UnLeading podcast website. I am a white woman and a native English speaker. As a Canadian passport holder with a Canadian education, I've had many opportunities to teach English to adults in West Asia, Europe, and across Canada. But because of my many unearned privileges, nobody has ever questioned my authority as an English speaker. I recognize that the same privilege is not afforded to many of the colleagues and students who I have worked with. I became an English teacher over 20 years ago. Working and teaching internationally, I dreamed of connections and reciprocal learning among peoples of the world. But no matter who my students were, what their goals and aspirations were, or which land we inhabited, the English language curricula were practically identical in every location. The institutionally imposed learning objective was always something along the lines of 'speak English and speak it properly.' What I am describing is an example of linguistic hegemony: the dominance and imposition of one variety of one language at the expense of all other languages. Within this hegemonic experience, I grew up in Saudi Arabia, but I don't speak Arabic. I went to high school in Texas, but I don't speak Spanish. My ancestral languages include different varieties of French and German, but I was raised without those, too. Why would you need any other languages when you can speak English fluently? My father tells a story about a time that his grand-mère took care of him for a summer when he was just a baby. When his mother came to pick him up, he was only speaking French. His mother was distraught because she couldn't understand him, so she decided that his grandmother wouldn't take care of him for extended periods any longer. Stories about language loss caused by linguistic hegemony are so common, but unlike the family story I shared, many stories are much more violent with extremely devastating outcomes. The issue with linguistic hegemony is that language is not neutral. Languages carry knowledge and understandings about the world, so insisting on one form of one language is the same as insisting on one way of being in the world. This is why we cannot talk about language without talking about the socio-political issues that affect people in a society. It is important to pay attention to which language practices feel normal and why. When we raise our awareness and challenge supposedly common-sense notions about our language practices, we can understand how linguistic justice supports all forms of liberation. So-called standard English is one of these common-sense notions that often goes unanalyzed. I say so-called because there isn't really one form of standard English that linguists and teachers agree on, grammar books and dictionaries differ according to who wrote them yet we talk about and teach Standard English as if it is a static object. Many assume the standardized form of a language supports effective communication, but empirical research demonstrates otherwise. There's a group of researchers who study

English as a lingua franca, meaning English that is spoken by people for whom English is not their first language, which, by the way, is the largest group of English speakers in the world. Anyway, these lingua franca researchers have found that many Standard English grammar rules do not guarantee or even support effective communication. In the written introduction I gave the example of the third person singular 's'. But if you pay attention, you can find many examples of clear communication that do not use subject-verb agreement. My dance studio's website, for example, has the page heading 'Who We Be'. I read that and fully understand that the info on that page will tell me about who the people are at the studio. Barbara Seidlhofer, one of the founding lingua franca researchers, also explains that not only is much of standard English grammar not required but the opposite is also true. Much of the time people create non-standard forms to facilitate communication, So, when I say standard English I'm not talking about an idealized form of language that we should strive to, I'm talking about a sociopolitical construct that has very real effects on people's lives. About five years after I began my career I came across an excerpt from the 1987 book *Borderlands La Frontera The New Mestiza* by Gloria Anzaldúa. Anzaldúa was a Chicana lesbian activist who grew up not far from where I went to high school. She said quote "So if you really want to hurt me talk badly about my language. Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity. I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself." End quote. What are we really doing to people when we insist on standard English? I want to share the case of Canada, since that's where we panelists are located, but I invite listeners to consider how issues of linguistic hegemony show up in their contexts. In settler colonial countries like Canada, the roots of standard language stem from European nation-building practices. Nation-states sometimes create federal policies like Canada's Official Languages Act, or OLA for short. The OLA was adopted to strengthen unity between the two colonial powers, the English and the French. The government of Canada explains that the purpose of the OLA is to, quote, "support the advancement of the two official languages in Canadian society." End quote. The reality is that policies like the OLA prioritize the languages of those in power, which helps to cement their power. Under this act and all its well-funded programming, the other 198 languages in Canada, including Indigenous languages, become unofficial. Within this linguistic hegemony, non-standard forms of official languages and languages that are unofficial are rendered inferior. Such stratification of languages creates and reproduces social hierarchies. Take, for example, the connection between linguistic stratification and racism. Andrea Sterzuk, a professor at the University of Regina, explains that because the federal government of Canada was imposed by white people, the official languages in Canada are considered white property, which is a quality that white people supposedly possess naturally. One way to maintain the privileged status held by white Canadians is to assert ownership of English and French by othering varieties spoken by racialized people. In my profession, linguistic racism is often disguised as native speakerism. Many job ads for English language teachers specified that being a native speaker of English or having near-native proficiency of English is a requirement for the position. When a native speaker of a standard or official language is associated with whiteness, native-like proficiency does

not change the requirement for whiteness. Indeed, when the standard is considered white property, linguistic hegemony is equivalent to white supremacy. To highlight the associated whiteness of standard English, linguistic justice scholar-activists like Dr. April Baker-Bell prefer the more accurate term 'white mainstream English.' When I became an English language teacher, if I had been told that I was teaching white mainstream English, I would have chosen a different career. Linguistic racism is just one system of oppression that white mainstream English perpetuates. In the written introduction to this episode, I also offer examples of sexism, ableism, and classism, which I invite listeners to read and consider. For Indigenous peoples who live on lands superimposed by nation-states, linguistic hegemony is particularly violent as it is coupled with attempts at genocide. Canada's imperialist and genocidal acts have annihilated hundreds of Indigenous languages. Indigenous languages carry values and knowledge of kinship. They support identity formation and spirituality, things that English or any other colonial language cannot replace. Hope and Indigenous resurgence lie in the continual act of resistance and protection by Indigenous activists, elders, and communities who have ensured that at least 11 Indigenous language families representing more than 60 languages have survived. In 2015, Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which arose from Indigenous advocacy, published 94 Calls to Action to redress many of the harms caused by Canada's violent colonialism. These calls to action include teaching Indigenous languages and protecting the right to Indigenous languages. Since then, educational institutions have doubled down on implementing decolonial policies. However, it's not only the job of educators to participate in reconciliatory acts. As a non-Indigenous Canadian and someone who has witnessed and participated in the perpetuation of linguistic hegemony around the world, I sometimes feel overcome by the enormity of it all. There have been times when the fear of causing further harm has prevented me from taking action. But then I remember the invitation from Indigenous language revitalization scholar-activists like Onawa McIver, and I am inspired to unlearn and unlead. I will leave you with this quote from her. "All Canadians need to learn about the land beneath their feet, learn about the first peoples whose land they live on and care about that, and join us in the fight to resurrect and revive Indigenous languages. The benefit to all of us is that this is our shared history. This is the history of this country. Many settlers that I meet will talk about the emptiness that they feel, the disconnect that they feel from their own ancestry, the stories that were lost, their own historical language that was erased when their family came to this country. So we all have an opportunity to be part of reviving and remembering and continuing on the real foundational first history of this country through Indigenous languages."

Vidya Shah: (00:15:06)

My goodness, Sonia. Thank you so, so much. That was such a beautiful introduction and it has me thinking about the limits of my own scholarship, which I really appreciate and want to say thank you for. As you share and talk about sort of the links between, in particular, the ways in which white supremacy and linguistic racism operates, it has me thinking about ways

that I can continue to expand how I think about white supremacy and racism. So I really appreciate this wonderful opening. And I'm so excited to continue this conversation with some wonderful people. First, I'd like to introduce Dr. Vijay Ramjattan, who is an assistant professor in Language and Literacies Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. Vijay's teaching and research interests focus on the intersections of language, race, and work within the context of education. Vijay is particularly interested in the notion of accent as a site of racialization and labour, as well as its potential to disrupt oppressive notions of spoken language. Welcome to the podcast, Vijay.

Vijay Ramjattan: (00:16:23)

Thank you so much, Vidya. And thank you, Sonia, for that great introduction.

Vidya Shah: (00:16:28)

I'd like to also introduce Atala Andratis, who is a teacher consultant with the Grand Erie District School Board K-12 with the equity and multilingual language learners portfolio. She is an educator who is passionate about challenging systems of oppression, who strives to create a classroom environment where every student feels valued and empowered. Welcome, Atala.

Atala Andratis: (00:16:49)

Thank you so much. It's a pleasure to be here with all of you.

Vidya Shah: (00:16:53)

I'd also like to introduce Marika Kunas, who's an assistant professor in the Department of Language and Literacy Education at the University of British Columbia. And her research specializes in French immersion programs and equity issues, particularly issues of race. Her dissertation focuses on racially minoritized students' experiences in French immersion programs. Marika is interested in finding ways to make French immersion more racially diverse and inclusive. Welcome, Marika.

Marika Kunas: (00:17:19)

Thank you so much for having me. And thank you, Sonia, for that great intro. I took some notes.

Vidya Shah: (00:17:26)

Kira Brant-Birioukov, welcome. Kira is Gondegi from Tanendegi Mohawk Territory in Ontario. Kira completed her PhD at the University of British Columbia before moving to Toronto to serve as assistant professor of Indigenous Education at York University, where she lives with her family today. Her current research in Haudenosaunee theories of education is grounded

in ancestral philosophies, curriculum theory, oral history, autobiography, creation histories, and language reclamation. Welcome, Kira.

Kira Brant-Birioukov: (00:17:56)

Thank you so much, Vidya, Sonia, everyone, it was such a pleasure to start my day this way.

Vidya Shah: (00:18:01)

So glad you're here, Kira. And Gail Prasad. Welcome, Gail. Gail is an associate professor in the Faculty of Education at York University, and her research examines children, youth, teachers, and families' social representations of linguistic diversity as well as critical, creative, and collaborative approaches to teaching and learning for critical multilingual language awareness in the classroom and beyond. Welcome, Gail.

Gail Prasad: (00:18:25)

Thank you, Vidya. And thank you, Sonia. I appreciate being here with all of you today.

Vidya Shah: (00:18:32)

Thank you, folks. And for full bios for our speakers, you can find them on this podcast on the Unleading website at www.yorku.ca/edu/unleading. I'm really excited to get into this conversation today and get into some questions that we have for our panelists. The first question is really a question about how leading for linguistic justice and language revitalization looks in your everyday practice. And so I'm really interested in, you know, based on how you are all each situated, how this topic comes to life in your everyday practice and work. And Vijay, I'd love to start with you on this question.

Vijay Ramjattan: (00:19:15)

Yeah, thanks so much, Vidya, for the question. So I should say, first of all, like my focus on linguistic justice is fairly narrow. I focus mostly on accent discrimination. And the way that I conceptualize it is kind of different than what other people might think of accent discrimination. So first of all, I think of it not purely in interpersonal terms, right? We think of accent discrimination in terms of prejudice, joking about people's accents, you know, just sort of those interpersonal sort of moments. But I think of accent discrimination more on the institutional level, how institutional processes, ideologies kind of influence how we individually perceive different types of accents. Another way that I re-conceptualize accent discrimination is really emphasizing how it's really an oral or auditory form of racism. So most of the time we think of racism as a visual type of oppression, right? We see someone and then we act, you know, accordingly. We discriminate against them in various ways. But I also want us to think in terms of accent discrimination, how racism is also auditory at the same time. So our listening practices reproduce notions of racial difference and racial inferiority. So, in terms of my everyday practice, I mostly work with international students who are, you know, mostly racialized as non-white in Canada, mostly positioned as so-called

non-native English speakers. So, in terms of my practice, I'm trying to challenge how universities, in terms of their institutional policies and practices, position the accents of international students as sort of deficient and, you know, unintelligible, unprofessional, and so on. So it's not really that international students have automatically deficient accents. It's really how the universities and institutions in general receive them, right, in terms of their, once again, processes and policies and so on. So, in terms of my own pedagogy, I'm trying to sort of challenge how we perceive different accents, which are often proxies for race, class, gender, and so on, and trying to, you know, change how we do things institutionally rather than changing the marginalized speaker. So I think I'll end it off there.

Vidya Shah: (00:21:30)

Thank you so much, Vijay, for the work that you do, both at the university and on social media, to have us all thinking in different and better ways. Marika, I'd love to hear from you on this question about how leading for linguistic justice and language revitalization. And what that looks like in your everyday practice.

Marika Kunas: (00:21:48)

Yeah, sure. So I think that for me, leading for linguistic justice really has to do a lot with kind of my identity as a teacher, and that's where I see a lot of that leadership happening before in high schools, now at the university level. So I really think about that, or I try to encourage students, including B. Ed. students, teacher candidates, to be using all languages in the classroom. It's really like how I think about de-centring English and really learning from students and positioning them as these sort of linguistic experts, which sometimes has amazing impacts, other times is so revolutionary to them. They're like, well, I don't know. It's just, I barely speak Portuguese. Don't call on me. So, I think there's really that internal struggle that we're all facing that I really try and challenge them and disrupt them on. And then just generally speaking, I'm really not emphasizing English as the only language of communication as much as possible and encouraging my B. Ed. students to do the same, because I think that's really where we'll see, hopefully, a lot of change happening, is if we can encourage the next generation of teachers. In my research, though, I kind of, this is something I'm still still evolving on and trying to understand more, and so this is where I'm hoping to become even maybe a better leader. But thinking about how I engage with official languages, particularly as someone who does research about French as the second language and shifting kind of that approach to understand it in terms of anti-colonialism. What does it mean to be researching French for linguistic justice? What does it mean for language revitalization? So that's kind of a daily questioning that I'm doing and developing. And then finally, I would say that I'm really approaching this from a place of curiosity. So, that's what it looks like for me. Everyday linguistic justice is a curiosity for different languages, a desire to learn more, a desire to decenter English, and as Sonia was talking about in the introduction, moving away from upholding standard English in my own practice, in the academy, in my everyday interactions. So, yeah, it's kind of a multifaceted approach, I'd say. I'll end there.

Vidya Shah: (00:24:08)

I just love that, Marika. Thank you so much. And I appreciate you sort of naming this tension around language revitalization for French languages, in particular, and the way, the very fact that French is one of our two colonial languages on these lands, and the fact that it's a quote-unquote official language says so much. And so holding that tension between the revitalization of a colonial language is, on these lands, is a really tricky place to be. And so I really appreciate you naming that and hoping that we can get into that more in the podcast. Welcome, Atala. I'd love to hear your thoughts on this question.

Atala Andratis: (00:24:49)

Yeah, thank you. My everyday challenges, especially as a consultant for a school board, so I deal with a kindergarten to grade 12 students within that area. And it's a I think Sonia mentioned in her introduction and so is Vigay, but there is this perception that accent equates to proficiency, or and therefore, there is this assumption that if you do not speak English with the correct accent or the correct pronunciation, then, therefore, you have a cognitive disability or an impediment. So, this is technically every day challenges, that's what I do. And part of my role is to support educators with programming, so students do have access to curriculum content. And those conversations can be, you know, challenging on a daily basis because it's this really assumption that students do know, and I quote when they say they don't know anything just because at that particular moment they are not proficient in English yet, that doesn't mean that they don't have any prior knowledge or experiences within, you know, what they are bringing. So part of my vision and my, I guess how I try to support my colleagues is that learner variability. We are all very unique individuals, regardless of who we are. And it's trying to share that deficit thinking to that asset baseline, that we all are bringing something and we all have something to learn from one another. So that is my pretty much my daily challenge. And also just to kind of shift it a little bit, too, because I do deal with families on a daily basis, too, is that a constant conversation with all, you know, with all peoples within the education system about, you know, how even we receive the families when they walk through our doors and sometimes our body language, we don't have to say anything about our body language speaks louder than words. It's a rolling of the eyes or the, you know, certain movements that is like, oh, my gosh, more or another one or something like that, right? That is sometimes it's not explicitly stated, but you can totally feel it. So, yeah, so I've been holding this particular role for a number of years, but it's my daily battle and I am so passionate about what I do. I love my job. And, you know, these conversations are so key. And I wanted to say during my introduction, Sonia, I am familiar with a quote. I do speak Spanish. So, yeah, definitely language. It's 'I am' language.

Language totally equates to identity. So that is very powerful. So thank you so much.

Vidya Shah: (00:27:30)

Thank you so much, Atala. And I just want to lift up the everyday struggle that is this work. And I've been following your work and just in all of the ways in which you are really trying to challenge that deficit thinking. And, thank you for bringing into the space as well, the idea that our bodies are language, too, and the ways in which we engage with our bodies can communicate so much. Thank you for that. Welcome, Gail. Would love to hear your take on this question.

Gail Prasad: (00:27:56)

Thanks, Vidya. There's so many things going through my mind. I was thinking about where or how I came to this work and to linguistic justice and language revitalization. And it started for me as a classroom teacher teaching, teaching English language arts and ESL and FSL. And now I'm in teacher education and I continue to do classroom-based work with teachers. But I think as I, you know, Sonia said, if she had known that what her job was going to be was teaching mainstream white mainstream English, that she would have chosen a different career, and I think my work over the last 15 years has shown me that my entire career has been predicated on learning and teaching others to teach colonial languages. And so I think that my everyday practice is unlearning and coming home into my body and understanding what that process has meant for me as an individual, and doing that as transparently as possible in front of my teacher candidates in front of teachers that are working in the classroom with students in a classroom. And I often do that through the arts so that we have another mode of communication. And I think it's summarized for me in two phrases that have kind of become like my hashtags, my taglines: that awareness matters and that growth is required for all. And when I emphasize the all, it's because I think whether you are a multilingual speaker, there's growth required. But I think there's even more growth required for the people who identify as monolingual English speakers or monolingual dominant speakers to become multilingual listeners. And with that, I work on the idea of developing plurilingual allyship. And for me, that means that we actively are trying to disrupt monolingualism as the norm, that we recognize our own linguistic privilege because we all have it in different spheres at different times and for different purposes. Exclusion comes in many forms, that we look at taking engaging in plurilingual risk-taking that we enter into linguistic and cultural collaboration with people and communities beyond our communicative comfort. There is a common sense notion that if I don't speak your language, I'm not required to talk to you. And actually, the reverse is true. And I think that the prime location to work on this is in K-12 because we, by law, are required to mix with people who are different than us. And so public education is a privileged space to be doing this critical work. And through the school-based partnerships that I've been working with over the last 15 years, I've seen children and teachers and administrators become language activists. And that's ultimately the goal for me. That I can take the experiences to date in my life, but also that I see in the lives of others and see them transformed into activism rather than experiences that stay rooted in our bodies of discrimination and expressing arm and what that does to us in the process. So.

Vidya Shah: (00:31:40)

Thank you so much, Gail. Your reflection here has me thinking about the ways in which our relations are so dependent on language and in particular linguistic privilege and dominance that it actually changes the ways in which we see the worth and the value and the possibilities in people and relationships. My mind is just going there. Thank you so much for that beautiful introduction. Kira, welcome. I'd love to hear your thoughts on this question.

Kiera Brant-Birioukov: (00:32:17)

Thank you, Vidya. I love going last, just for the record. You just get to witness and take in everything, and just so deeply inspired by so many thoughts. Gail's quote, 'that linguistic justice is like coming home in my body' is just, it's such like a visceral, tangible representation of what I think ultimately what I seek to do every day, and for me, it's it's in my own home, it's in my body, it's with my kin, and it's the revitalization of our ancestral language Kanyen'kéha, every day for myself and every day with my son, and I think that, in, for so many Indigenous, communities I think it's so innate, like since the day you were born, you think about what it means to be a good ancestor, but that really comes full circle in such an urgent way, becoming a parent or just like being involved in the lives of little people of the future and just how tangible that is. And so for my, creating, the next generation of Mohawk language speakers, in my own home feels, so damn urgent and so damn serious every single day, and yet with a complete lack of support, complete lack of infrastructure, and resources to be able to do so, and so to create a Mohawk language speaker in my home I need to confront my own shame and sense of shortcomings and sense of less than, that I'm less than a Mohawk woman because you know my ancestral language doesn't just roll off my tongue. It's deeply uncomfortable, and confronting tons of mistakes. And we often say that, like you, you can't have mistakes teaching and learning Kanyen'kéha, because there's no room for error. If I mispronounce and then he mispronounces, our language continues to be decimated. And so, confronting all of that in such a daily way, and then bringing it into my work and my profession could be really exhausting as well. Particularly when there seems to be a hunger for Indigenous languages and yet the spaces don't always have the same goals and same agenda. It is my object to create in the next generation of language speakers, but other institutions often just want a tuition and the novelty and the sexiness and we teach Indigenous languages without the objective of actually creating speakers. Something that is actually quite token So not to say that it's all for nothing, but seeing at times the reappropriation and exploitation of Indigenous languages isn't, is it always quite as benevolent as it seems and so carrying that and embodying that and not able to escape that, the weight of that feels, feels, heavy.

Vidya Shah: (00:35:48)

I so appreciate this Kira, and I appreciate the ways that you're naming the personal struggles with language revitalization in your home and elsewhere and also the institutional struggles

around tokenism and appropriation. And that these are journeys, that these are deeply and emotional and embodied journeys that many of us are on. And that oftentimes language is something that you learn that's separate, but it's so much part of who we are and influences how we see ourselves and take up space in the world. And so I really appreciate you bringing the realness of learning our own languages and as you're speaking and thinking about languages that I don't know that are in my ancestors as well and the shame that I carry around that too and what that means about loss of culture and loss of ideas maybe. Yeah. Thank you so much.

Kiera Brant-Birioukov: (00:36:40)

Thank you.

Vidya Shah: (00:36:42)

And you know this conversation leads us into another question here that really is one that many of you have already touched on and I'd love to go deeper and this is really, this question this next question the challenges that we face in leading for linguistic justice and language revitalization. What ideas does this disrupt in leadership broadly defined there are folks on this podcast that are coming to us from K to 12, from higher education, from the non-profit sector, from the for-profit sector, and so many people are grappling with how to think about language differently and how to challenge language hegemony and so what are some of the challenges that you face in leading this work from my particular standpoint?

Gail, I'd love to begin with you for this question.

Gail Prasad: (00:37:38)

Alright, it's a big question. I think, that I approach it again in teacher education and professional development, but from these two seeds that have taken root in me: the idea that awareness matters and growth is required for all. And they translate into fostering a shift in mindset that awareness matters, that awareness of linguistic diversity, awareness of what it means to be multilingual, the awareness that we're all capable of expanding our communicative repertoires, and do actively, whether we see ourselves as monolingual or multilingual. But then understanding and recognizing that awareness matters and that awareness matters, and that awareness of linguistic awareness alone is not enough, and so it has to translate into practice, and that's where growth is required. So how I try and foster that growth is through the process of disrupting monolingualism as the norm and also disrupting or demystifying language conventions for what they are and who they serve and understanding that because language is power and is always about power we have to make that explicit and I am principally thinking about making it explicit for children and for youth in schools, so that they understand both the rules of the game, how they're perceived in the ways they speak, but also having the tools then to resist and to respond. And I know I come from being a classroom teacher and then at the secondary level and then transitioning into working at the elementary level and I would say that my kindergarten students taught me the most in my classroom career. And my work with elementary multilingual students is

what has transformed my convictions around why this work is always critical. And it's because I recognize that children-the stakes are so high, and this is what keeps me up at night: that they don't have any choice over what language they're raised in; they don't have any choice and what languages they're spoken to in. Their choice comes into how they respond: they can either speak the language that they're spoken to, or they can resist, and often when they do resist, the adults in their lives have consequences for it. And I come from a background that I could have been raised in a multilingual home; my mother is Japanese, my father is East Indian and they chose to raise us in English because they were told that was the only way we'd succeed in school. And so I think that parents are making the best possible choices for their kids, and kids live with those choices. But then they go to school, and teachers also make choices for them. And so there's a difference in saying 'we should stop teaching conventions, we should just totally resist' and then also not giving kids the option of understanding tools and how language works and the structure of it. So, I'm torn about how do I do both? How do I empower children to be leaders that can help us understand their experience? Because childhood is an expertise that we age out of, and we never can return to. And I, you know, I find it emotional that there is such a power loss there so, for me, I guess disrupting our ideas of schooling and leadership is really rethinking what does child-centered learning mean from a language perspective, and how do we involve children in leadership in schools? I'll stop there.

Vidya Shah: (00:41:56)

Wow, Gail. You have me thinking about a lot here, and in particular, the lack of choices for young people, and the ways in which resistance is often punished. Yeah, has me emotional too. One of the ways that we, can challenge this work is, as you're saying, like really recognizing the leadership and the expertise and the sovereignty of young people in these spaces to sort of take up the world and make sense of the world and in ways that feel that feel right for them and the ways in which at the exact time in development when choice and possibility and sovereignty are so important is when it is limited the most. Thank you for sharing this. Marika would love to hear from you on this question: what are some of the challenges that you face in leading from this standpoint?

Marika Kunas: (00:43:00)

Thank you so much for that, Gail. Every time you speak, it's enlightening. I'm gonna start actually with external even though I would say most of my challenges feel more internal than external, but I think that one of the things you hear about a lot is when people are like, 'Oh, well, I have to teach the curriculum.' And I think that when I'm a lead for linguistic justice and language revitalization, there are you know structures in place you have to speak to as a teacher, particularly in the K-12 context there's a bit more fluidity which is nice in higher education, but I tend to work with be a Bachelor of Education students a lot. And so, they really are concerned about the curriculum and I think that that's a challenge, but I think we just need to view it in a different light, as maybe even a resource. How can we enrich

what are the positives of the curriculum? How can we challenge the curriculum ourselves in our practice? It's kind of how I try and reposition that. Something else that's less rare, but there are sometimes, you know students own opinions or blocks around language and not being able to kind of raise their own critical consciousness, so in my particular context, thinking about French as a second language, a lot of people still really value Parisian French, and so going back to Sonia's introduction about this idea of kind of white languages, it's the same idea as English, it's the exact same block. And really, it really is very much embedded in a lot of teachers' and students' thinkings and preferences when it comes to language learning. So I think that's something that I'm constantly struggling against and challenging over and over again. But internally, I think is where I find most of the challenges in doing this work. In another project I'm actually on with Sonia we were evaluating kind of our own thoughts about languages, our relationship with Indigenous languages specifically, and I kind of realized that I've always said I want to learn an indigenous language but part of the block for me was I wanted to learn one that would be useful, right? So then I thought well what does that mean? And so I'm seeing my own mind as someone who's trying so hard to work against these colonial, capitalist, even ideologies; they're still embedded. So learning for me, I think, is the biggest thing, and constantly challenging my thinking, but also trying to do that in a way that I give myself grace and recognize I was raised in these systems and it's so hard to think beyond them, and as Gail was saying, like keeping that growth going. And I think the main maybe the main challenge that you know anyone doing sort of justice work faces, has a lot to do with fatigue. So for me, the way that I try and combat that is by finding community, working in collaboration, even just this conversation this morning is really revitalizing me, so I think that's really important. And yeah, just that understanding my own identity, my own linguistic identities, my own histories, and how colonialism, racism, and even like the transatlantic slave trade have impacted my own languages is another huge part of something that I continue to struggle with and understand as an English first language speaker, not by choice, basically. So I'll end there.

Vidya Shah: (00:46:32)

Thank you Marika, I appreciate that so much. I appreciate especially this piece around, you know, there's so much of the exhaustion that you named and was also named earlier as well in this work that exists to try to challenge the, to try to constantly challenge hegemonies in various ways and I appreciate so much you naming the importance of unlearning and also giving ourselves grace in that process, because there's, this is never ending work, this is never, there's never an endpoint, there's never an arrival point to say that we have figured it all out, that we are, that we've arrived somewhere and so I really appreciate you appreciate you naming both the internal and the external struggles that exist in this work. Kiera would love to hear from you on this question.

Kiera Brant-Birioukov: (00:47:27)

Definitely, definitely. I, for myself of coming as an educator and now working with our undergrad and graduate Indigenous cohorts who all see themselves as educators and in many different diverse respects, one of the biggest challenges is even just confronting the relationship and the historical relationship between Indigenous languages and schooling and the Canadian schooling system, wherein the residential schooling legacy has been the biggest culprit of the complete erasure of Indigenous languages. So now within one generation to turn around and put a lot of faith in the Canadian schooling system to serve us is not only met with a lot of skepticism, but just not much proof in the pudding because even to think about our languages belonging in school I think that there's a lot of buy-in and especially post TRC a lot of eagerness and willingness to to see Indigenous languages having a place and being valued. But there still is a lot of barriers and contention around who has the right to teach our languages. And so many barriers that keep our language speakers out of the classroom. They're not OCT certified. They may not have an undergrad. Many don't have a B . Ed and then even those that do are often being taken away from community or are getting more competitive salary and benefit, or long-term employment to teach non-indigenous children the language because our school boards can offer more competitive and sustainable employment for our language teachers than staying within community or communities where our Indigenous population actually is. So who has the right to teach and in turn who has the right to teach and who has the right to learn an indigenous language? We're not always seeing that strong correlation that it is Indigenous people who have the right to learn our indigenous language. And all of that is really significantly confronted by funding and lack of sustainable funding, and the complete contrast where folks who speak English can graduate high school can galavant the world and have quite an exciting adventure to be an English language teacher but likewise, our Indigenous language learners are going into poverty and putting an immense amount of sacrifice to relearn our ancestral language and then perhaps in turn to keep that same wavelength of again a big financial sacrifice to stay in community and to continue to teach in the community that language. And so, that cycle really is not only is it, it's not incentivized but it's just not particularly sustainable. It's not a sustainable model to truly create language speakers at least through the schooling model as exists.

Vidya Shah: (00:51:00)

Thank you so much Kira for naming this. It's the impossible choice you know and it's horrible that people have to make this choice between revitalizing language and something that's so sacred to who we are and choosing you know whether or not we can live sustainably. It is a horrible choice to have to make and it just speaks to the ongoing ways in which colonialism is operating every single day not just within our spaces but also structurally between various systems to ensure that some languages are not actually learned, you know like in many ways I keep thinking that this is it is intentional that it is being done this way and we have to you know think about Gail's point earlier about sort of linguistic activists, like this is where this is where so much of our activist work can be directed, is around these sort of hidden ways or

not so hidden ways that power is operating to keep people from their original languages. Thank you, Kiera, thank you for that. Vijay, I think you wanted to add something to this conversation.

Vijay Ramjattan: (00:52:19)

Yeah. so Marika brought up capitalism and that made me kind of think about the whole purpose of schooling in today's sort of neoliberal world. We often think of schooling as preparation for the so-called real world, right? And when we connect this to language, right? If the real world wants so-called standard English, right, the duty of educators is to teach students standard English, right? Not doing so is perceived as a failure, right, a professional failure. So I find that a lot of educators in particular sort of perceive you know language teaching as sort of a necessary evil, like they have to subscribe to these hegemonic linguistic norms because they're doing a disservice to students if they don't do so, right? So I think one thing to remember is that the school is not separate from the rest of society, right? So the school is the real world as well, the school is where you know oppressive language ideologies are come alive, right? So I think in terms of you know challenges, to sort of make my response a little bit more coherent, I think oftentimes we think of language as sort of a technical skill to master right, for job for future academic success, etc but we don't really think about you know once again language as embodiment, language as a tool to reproduce social relations, language as a tool to reproduce oppression, and so on. So I think in terms of a major challenge for me that I experience is sort of getting people to reconnect language with its social, in a social context right and understanding that the school is also where you know we can disrupt these ideologies that permeate in the rest of society so, yeah, that was kind of my thoughts on this question.

Vidya Shah: (00:54:06)

I so appreciate that Vijay and it has me thinking about international students as well and the ways in which we conceptualize international students in K-12 and higher education through such a neoliberal lens, and then the ways in which language acquisition or English language acquisition furthers the neoliberal aim in those spaces as well, and it's just a whole cycle, a whole cycle that continues to depoliticize language and move it from the social and the embodied and the cultural realms into this really warped sense of what language is and can be. Thank you for naming that. And Atal, I think you wanted to share more on this question as well.

Atal Andratís: (00:54:50)

I just wanted to add, I think Marika just mentioned about when we are dealing with educators because that's what I my my work works around like is supporting curriculum and I think sometimes too, and Vijay mentioned the word too, I think it's how we are disrupting certain things. I think in school, we do have the power to do a lot of disruption sometimes as educators, we forget you know the amount of power and privilege that we hold by being in

those classrooms. And curriculum can definitely be re-like disrupted and rethought. I think Marika you even used the word rethinking and that's that is part of how I you know support educators: how can we rethink curriculum? Because they use the words when students may not be proficient in English yet, or why not they will say the validity of my course, the integrity of my course, and they cannot get the credit because X, Y, and Z. And unfortunately, educational policies that currently exist might not support what I'm saying, however, you know, the curriculum, especially the way the documents have been revised, whether it's for lip service or not, but there is very powerful language in some of the documents when it comes to including culturally relevant responsive pedagogy, universal design for learning frameworks, you know, embedding Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Like it is explicitly stated. and it's how we interpret those messages. And I think there is a lot of power in how can we really rethink and disrupt some of the traditional methods of teaching and how we can kind of disrupt to be more you know ,and I love how Gail brought the idea of multilingual listeners and then really that plurilingualism I think it's just a matter of how we are approaching and then just kind of to close my statement, I think when I think Sonia mentioned that if she would have known what she knows now about her position and so is Gail, however I want to bring it to the other point too is because of those experiences and now, we are having these type of conversations. I think we, you know, we are in certain positions and in certain places because we need to be, and it's those moments, whether good or bad, you know, that create value and then make us who we are. So, to be the disruptors, and to be, you know, bring those that activism that we want to see for some of the new generation. So I think we should be really proud of what we have accomplished and what we continue to be, to accomplish because I think these experiences, especially for some of the ones you mentioned, but me too as coming here as a language learner not arriving with the language. I was, you know, an ELL student put into classes, and you know again that stigma and that you know less-than kind of thing. But because of those experiences, I that's why I do, right now, right. So, I think it's a little bit of a cycle, and then you want to disrupt those experiences that happen to you and really create change. So, I think we should be really proud and re-think about how we put a thing, and then move it in a different way rather than maybe not wanting to do what we were meant to be doing. I think we should, we should continue to do what we do, so thank you.

Vidya Shah: (00:58:03)

Atala, I appreciate you because you're moving us right into our third question. But just before we get there, I wanted to hold up two things that you said. The first is it's making me think about how wonderful it would be if in you know non-profit or for-profit or K-12 or higher education spaces that the expectation for learners in that space was to become multilingual listeners, that it would change the focus on who has to do the learning and how. I'm just imagining, in the language curriculum documents, that you know if it were listed there as one of the expectations, that we become multilingual listeners, how that might change you know, the de-centering of English as the only language that is worthy of being

spoken or listening to and how you know how ridiculous that is in so many ways. And I also want to hold up the this point that you're making about the ways in which language can be appropriated for very specific means, that even though in these you know curriculum documents and elsewhere it talks about language revitalization and the importance of it, when we hear words like integrity of the classroom, the validity of the classroom what is allowed in the classroom, robust language, all of this is coded language for maintaining linguistic hegemony. And I really want to thank you for naming that because this speaks to the disconnect between what we claim we are aiming for in our classrooms, in our spaces of learning, in our organizations, and what is actually being upheld because of these coded, because of this coded language. And folks, as we, as we think about Atala's last words and the possibilities, and how you know, the fact that we're having these kinds of conversations and where it might move to, I'm really interested in how you all are conceiving of the possibilities of leading for linguistic justice and language revitalization. This question sort of popped in my head as we were, I was listening earlier, but, you know, I'd love to hear also your take on what a learning space, and I don't want to just say classroom because it could be in community, it could be in an organization, but what a learning space might look like if linguistic justice and language revitalization really was centered. What would it look like? What would it sound like? What would it feel like in that space. And so, in thinking about that, what are the possibilities that might emerge from really centering linguistic justice in our work? And what do you hope that leaders might take away from this conversation? And Atala, let's begin with you.

Atala Andratis: (01:00:46)

Thank you. As I was listening to Gail, I just wanted to echo to what she says about the kindergarten classroom. I think if we had a choice, I think everything will look like a kindergarten classroom when everybody has the means and the ways to communicate with each other without hierarchies, and they just have a beautiful way to communicate with one another when they are in a space. But anyway, so I think definitely opportunities like these, these conversations really opens up the possibilities for creating a more inclusive and equitable environment. I think developing that sense of belonging and really not forgetting that the language equates to identity. I think if we really want to affirm identities, we need to value, we need to value languages. And I think as leaders, you know, we might take away the importance of, again, valuing multiple identities and integrating the diverse languages and cultures in our practices by recognizing that there is a way broader social and psychological and educational benefits that these efforts can bring to, like it's not just about, you know, getting the credits or getting the degree. It just goes beyond about, you know, who we are as human beings. I know there is definitely a need for commitment. Kiera mentioned that there is a lot of desire and a lot of, you know, good intentions, but it's, you know, sometimes the commitment and the actual, you know, the actionable pieces to bring things to reality, it's a little bit of a different story. So I think definitely we need commitment and collaboration to really overcome all these challenges that will actually drive to

meaningful change. And that's the, I guess that's the difficulty part to do that, cause if we knew how to do it, it would have been done already. But I think people like, like these individuals in this call, I think we just need to keep kind of, you know, moving forward and really challenging the systems that we're in. Cause it's very valuable what we do.

Vidya Shah: (01:02:48)

Thank you so much, Atala. Yes, this call to action is so important, so important. Kiera, I'd love to hear from you on this question.

Kiera Brant-Birioukov: (01:02:56)

Mm-hmm. I think taking up those, those similar themes of it's going back to, to what is the, intent and purpose of, of what we seek to do around language revitalization. And I think that the role and place of, of Indigenous languages as a tool for empowering folks, and going back to the roots of education. Now, mind you, not the Canadian schooling education system, but we can, we can dream together. But so often folks say that, you know, well, there isn't really, there's so many competing demands, right? I don't have enough time capacity to be able to, you know, prioritize yet another thing and, Indigenous languages can be a priority if we make it a priority and what role does it get to serve, not only for some fun curriculum content to hit some checkmarks, but the richness that tapping into Indigenous worldview offers on all of us to confront climate crisis and anthropocentrism and the dangers and the harm of misogyny and the patriarchy and what Indigenous languages offers is quite an alternative worldview that can really enrich all of our lives and it's just so underutilized I think as an opportunity to think differently and to carry ourselves a little bit differently. There's there's so much richness in there.

Vidya Shah: (01:04:56)

Thank you so much, Kira. And for naming this idea that these are these are knowledges and knowledge systems that everybody benefits from, that it is, we become different people when we can make sense of the world differently and hear differently, and I think that that's such an important part of this conversation. And I'm going to invite folks as well on this call to share any links to programs or resources that might be helpful to listeners, as well as ways that we can support language revitalization efforts. You know I think there's a lot of people who will be listening to this and wondering how can I get involved? How can I support? And so we'll make those links available to you on the page. Thank you so much Kiera. Vijay, would love to hear from you on this question around possibilities of this work and what classrooms or learning spaces might sound like.

Vijay Ramjattan: (01:05:46)

Yeah, so I'm kind of going back to my earlier critique of language as this sort of technical skill that we can refine in very specific ways. I think we have to embrace the messiness of language and communication in general, right? So I think oftentimes we're focused on sort

of being efficient in how we communicate with one another, sort of trying to get the job done as quickly as possible, but I don't think we spend enough time just sort of slowing down, embracing the not knowing when it comes to communication. So, in terms of you know accent for example, and understanding different types of accents, you know sometimes it's okay not to always understand what someone is saying, right? It's okay to take the time and sort of explore: Okay, well what when am I doing as a listener, for example to contribute to this misunderstanding? So for leaders, I think it's really important you know to sort of embrace this idea that you know it's okay not to know, you know, while communicating it's okay, it's okay to sort of step back and let others take the lead in terms of like making themselves understood, finding different ways to communicate without having any one person change you know the entirety of their linguistic repertoire. You know, in a higher education context where I come from, you know, one thing that I try to stress like in my teaching is that you know to disrupt this idea of sounding like a native speaker to be understood, I really emphasize this idea that to be understood is really a collective process, right? It requires the speaker and listener to work together. So even in terms of like simple activities, instead of telling students, 'Okay, change your pronunciation of this particular phoneme or change your intonation pattern, is there any way that you can maybe use your body or use the physical environment around you to get your point across? Right? So you know these types of activities take time, right? There's some unknowing happening, but you know eventually, people will get their message across and you know communication will continue and you know continue going forward. So I think those are some things that we can consider.

Vidya Shah: (01:07:54)

I appreciate that so much Vijay, this idea of the messiness of language and the unknowing, maybe the un-languaging as we consider language revitalization and linguistic justice but really this engaging with the messiness of this in really sort of humane and more than human ways to think about how we might come to know one another differently and again thinking about the word grace, that Marika used earlier. Thank you so much for sharing this, Vijay.

Gail, would love to hear from you on this question, possibilities that you see emerging from this.

Gail Prasad: (01:08:35)

Thanks, Vidya. I think that one of the things that I'm hopeful about or the possibilities I'm thinking about comes from my partnership with classrooms. I've been working, I've worked in Canada and France in the US., building partnerships with teachers and schools, and school boards, and, what that's given me opportunity to see in practice is that when a community comes together to embrace the idea that it's possible to become multilingual listeners, to support multilingual speakers, that what we are doing is not just building an inclusive

classroom; we're building an expansive one. So I come back to that idea that growth is required for all, and I think that there is hope that their growth is possible for all students, for all teachers, for all administrators, for all policymakers. And I think my vision is that we would begin to develop an understanding and a way of curricular design and school design that would say: we need to abandon the traditional notion that schools are monolingual spaces, to one that helps us understand that we are teaching and learning together, in multilingual classrooms. It's not about giving English to an English learner so they can succeed. It's about understanding, conceptualizing what togetherness, what belonging, what thriving in community looks like and means, and language is a part of that. So I think that all teachers can become critically language-aware, and I often say that for me, building language awareness depends on three components: criticality, creativity, and collaboration. And, you know after Marika spoke shared earlier, she mentioned curiosity, and that's the fourth C. I think it, you know curiosity gives us this disposition of humility, that puts us in that position of becoming a listener. And I just think, you know, in light of the world that we live in with the, with so many sources of conflict and violence, that we need to be cultivating this habit of listening as the first step, and then using that as the foundation that we build these thriving multilingual spaces on.

Vidya Shah: (01:11:33)

Gail I love this picture, thriving multilingual spaces. And I keep thinking about this notion of expansive classrooms or expansive learning spaces, what a beautiful concept. And thinking about the four C's that you and Marika collectively came up with: criticality, creativity, collaboration, and curiosity. What a great way to approach any learning space. Thank you so much and I'd love to hear from you Marika on this question.

Marika Kunas: (01:12:05)

Yeah, for sure, and of course no pressure ending the whole conversation. I'll start first with saying I can't wait to be credited in that article, Gail. No I love those four C's that's actually that's a really great orientation for thinking and for me when I think about the possibilities of of this linguistic justice and language revitalization what comes to mind the most this sense of belonging or having a strong and positive identity, which I don't think can be understated its importance, right? In our students, in our teachers, if we feel that we belong in our classrooms, in our schools, and our communities, that to me is a complete game changer, right? It really shows uh a completely different orientation to the world where everyone can belong and feel powerful and welcome in their own identities and their own languages. Beyond this feeling of identity and belonging, I think generally speaking, just approaching a more plurilingual multilingual stance towards teaching is just engaging. I think our students are gonna like it, that's a huge possibility and a huge thing that I use to try and turn people towards this orientation is if we're focusing on you know English only or French only, this monolingual standard white French/ white English, it's not engaging, right? So, if we turn towards linguistic justice, we turn towards language revitalization and centering students'

identities, that's engaging and that's a huge possibility for promoting learning of all languages. What I'll end with is two thoughts. The first one is that when I was approached for this podcast I thought well I'm not a leader in the field, so that was surprising you chose me and then Vidya kind of pushed back and said 'no I think you really are and here's why' and for one I appreciate that but for two I think we need to as researchers as teachers specifically, we really need to see ourselves as leaders. Inherently we are. We're the person in the room who's leading the conversation who's leading the learning and I don't think it needs to be seen as we have to know everything or we have to do everything all at once but It can be instead these small steps turning our orientations approaching things with curiosity, and bringing in linguistic justice, bringing in language revitalization, bringing in different linguistic identities I think will, is really what we need to be turning towards as leaders in the field, yeah.

Vidya Shah: (01:14:39)

Thank you so much Marika. And I want to just hold up this idea that you know for folks listening who may or may not see themselves as quote-unquote leaders, I again I have to be honest after almost 15 podcasts now I don't know how to define leadership and I think that's the very point of all of this. But I do want to say that I really want to hold up Marika's invitation here, that in any ways that we have influence and power to change what is happening, to fight for better worlds, to make spaces where everybody can feel like they can show up in their fullness and feel a sense of power and sovereignty matched with curiosity and openness and grace. That is it is, it is our collective responsibility to think about what it means to make spaces linguistically just in intersections with all other forms of justice, but really thinking about the ways that we can invite different listening, invite different beings, invite plurilingual experiences, promote and fight for, especially Indigenous language revitalization, but thinking about all the ways in which as leaders in the various spaces that we're in, whether again this be non-profit, profit, classrooms K to 12, higher education, wherever we find ourselves located, what might it look like to bring the sense of linguistic justice into our space. So I want to really take a moment to thank this tremendous panel, I have learned so much, and it's just it's also so lovely seeing the ways in which you all pick up on each other's pieces and come up with 4 C frameworks, and all kinds of really fun things that are happening in this call. But I just want to say I have tremendous respect for the work that you all are doing and I appreciate and I'm very grateful for the learning that you have offered me, and that I know that you have offered the listeners on this call. And I'd love to bring in Sonia back into the conversation. Sonia has been uh listening plurilingually and multilingually to this conversation and really would love to hear your thoughts on some potential takeaways for folks.

Sonia Martin: (01:16:54)

Thank you, everyone. Wow. I am going to be listening to this podcast on repeat for a while and sharing it with everyone. I'm so in awe and impressed with all of you and everything

that you have shared, and I think that these, this discussions, the world needs to hear this. So thank you for sharing everything. I am tasked with sharing some things that I've noticed that you said, like some, I don't want to say highlights, but some pieces that popped out that I thought might be worth mentioning as we conclude the podcast. And as I was preparing, I thought, 'Oh, I know what I'll do. I'll focus on the tensions, the tensions that come up for people,' and so I noticed a couple of tensions like, you know the requirement in institutions and organizations and educational spaces to use and teach conventional standard forms is in tension with the need for people to be okay with the messiness of language and the need for us to become multilingual listeners. And I noticed the tension of the importance of recognizing that language is flexible and it's important to let go of oppressive standards but also it's important for some languages, especially in the Indigenous language revitalization, that we pay attention to pronunciation and ways of delivering the language to the new generation of speakers. So those were a couple of tensions I noticed. But I have to say, in this group, it wasn't really the tensions that was a theme that came up the most. What popped out the most for me was the fact that language and languaging is an embodied act. Language is embodied. And so as I was listening and taking notes about what you were speaking, every time I heard a sort of embodied word, I highlighted it. So here are some of the things that that are in my notes. I've got 'our bodies are language too', 'unlearning and coming home into my body', 'experiences of discrimination stay rooted in our bodies', we talked about feelings that are very visceral like shame and pride we talked about fatigue and being like physically tired by doing this linguistic this language work. So it's important to remember or to be aware that this idea that language is just some technical tool like Vijay described it, isn't a natural idea. It was something that was created. It has a history it was a creation by white men basically who looked at it like a scientific object and there's a long history about that, we don't have time in this podcast, but it's not actually how people experience language. Language is experienced in our bodies. We feel it. So, I think that that's something that we need to really hold on to because a disembodiment is a way of getting people to just move through the motions to serve the systems of the powers that be without feeling. But when we bring the embodiment back in then we really focus on the feeling. And that's what Marika was getting at when she was like 'it's just more engaging' like it's just more fun, like talking about plurilingualism and different languages and the messiness of language and the not always understanding. It doesn't have to be a disaster it can be it can feel good, and I think that's that's something to hold on to.

Vidya Shah: (01:20:57)

Thank you so much Sonia. It has me thinking about how cartesian ways of thinking of this sort of split between the mind and the body and perhaps what some might call the spirit of the soul has us engaging with language in very discrete and dehumanizing ways and I really want to thank you for naming the importance of seeing the embodied, the wholeness of this experience of language and languaging. And again folks, I want to say to to panelists here a deep thank you. This has been a humbling experience for me to learn in the way that

I have learned on this podcast, and like Sonia will be listening to this podcast several times to really let these ideas settle and sit in my body in ways that I think are really important to who I am as a human and in connection to others. And so I want to thank you for that. And I want to thank you to the listeners for joining us on another episode of the Unlearning Podcast series. It's such a pleasure to be in these conversations, and such a pleasure to get to continuously unlearn and find the limits of our own collective understandings of who we are and how we make this world together. And we invite you to continue on this journey with us, if it feels right to you, and if it's resonating, to continue thinking about and feeling into what it might mean to unlearn. Thanks so much.