Ethnic Studies Pedagogies
Volume 4, Issue 2 (December 2026)
Call for Submissions

Rematriating Bilingual Education through Ancestral Epistemologies and Ethnic Studies Pedagogies

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Issue Description:

This special issue turns to rematriation as a framework for returning to ancestral ways of knowing and being, grounding bilingual education in Indigenous and community-rooted epistemologies that restore relationality, healing, and liberation. The intent of this issue emerges from a deep recognition of the historical and ongoing oppression endured by communities of color through settler colonialism and linguistic erasure, where U.S. language policies have functioned as instruments of domination—systematically erasing languages other than English and enforcing assimilation to sustain imperialist and neoliberal agendas (Ovando, 2003; Spring, 2016). Within this context, Ethnic Studies and bilingual education share an intertwined history of resistance, both born out of struggles against the erasure and forced assimilation of communities of Color and their native languages have long been key strategies of domination, linguistic suppression and cultural genocide (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014; Spring, 2016). According to Ovando (2003), these ideologies similarly found expression in the design and implementation of Bilingual Education across the United States (U.S.), where each new era and wave was marked by the neoliberal goals of U.S. imperialism—from funding foreign language models in support of cold-war espionage to dismantling bilingual education to sustain the hegemony of English.

Despite systematic efforts in using language as a tool of oppression, bilingual education is also rooted in a legacy of resistance. For example, Flores and Garcia (2017) note the activist efforts that "framed bilingual education as part of the broader effort to dismantle White supremacist relations of power" (p.18). This is inclusive of the radical visions of the Young Lords and Brown Berets who called for a race radical vision of bilingual education that situates language within a broader global struggle against coloniality, white supremacy and the psychological imperialism that communities of Color experience in schools (Flores, 2016) while also reclaiming education as a site of collective dreaming, memory-making, and world-building grounded in ancestral visions of liberation (Moreno Sandoval, et al, 2024; Kovach, 2021).

Similar visions are also part of the genealogy and history of Ethnic Studies and the Third World Liberation Front (Okihiro, 2016).

However, the race radical vision of bilingual education was short-lived. During the civil rights movement, bilingual education diverged from its roots in resistance as liberal multiculturalists depoliticized the bilingual education narrative by acquiescing to racial tolerance and equal access to broken mainstream institutions that were disconnected from community struggle, liberation or social transformation (Flores & Garcia, 2017; Ovando, 2003). These reductive approaches to bilingual education, by design, reproduce white supremacy while at the same time affect the psychosocial identity development of children and youth (González, 2024; Soto-Peña & González, 2025) often leaving little room for the joy, wonder, and cultural affirmation that multilingual youth experience when their languages, stories, and identities are honored as sources of power.

Liberal multiculturalism continues to flourish alongside neoliberal policy reforms that are (in part) predicated on surveillance, competition, and the commodification of knowledge and racialized bodies. Claudia Cervantes-Soon (2023) argues that this context has translated to bilingual education being "accountable to the wrong stakeholders, leading to its susceptibility to co-option and diminishing its transformative potential" (p. 135). The neoliberalization of bilingual education is further made visible by numerous empirical studies and theoretical analyses that situate multilingual communities as linguistically "limited," while reducing bilingual education to a mere tool for acquiring "academic language" (Valdés, 1997; Lin, 2013; García & Kleyn, 2016; Menken & Solorza, 2014; Tollefson & Tsui, 2018).

Considering how both oppression and self-determination of minoritized communities are woven within the historical tapestry of bilingual education, we assert the need to reclaim and rematriate (Tuck, 2011) the field to the race-radical roots of liberation through ancestral knowledges and ethnic studies pedagogies. Drawing from Indigenous epistemologies, Tuck (2011) discusses the importance of reconceptualizing research and practice as a process of returning home—to work in *anticolonial* ways and *in community* with communities of Color. This is evident in the collective efforts modeled by Indigenous communities who redefine conceptualizations of schooling by centering ancestral dreaming, intergenerational accountability, and land-based knowledge transmission in the process of linguistic revitalization (McCarty, 2018; Ward Taira & Maunakea, 2022) refusing the confines of settler schooling and reimagining education as a return to relationships, place, and purpose. Moreover, we assert healing, joy, and transformation should also be in alignment with the rematriation of bilingual education (González, Soto-Peña & Barton, forthcoming) not only as acts of resistance but as expressions of radical love, celebration, and the creative capacity of communities to imagine otherwise. We envision bilingual education not just as a site of struggle but as a space of communal becoming where language carries laughter, care, ceremony, and hope. Barton (2022) exemplifies the potentialities of this intersection noting how black femme multilingual children

found power and joy within bilingual contexts when their herstories[1] were centered in the curriculum employed.

We situate this special issue within the realm of possibility—with the goal of rematriating bilingual education back to communities of Color, grounded in transformative ethnic studies pedagogies (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020) and *praxis* (Tintiangco-Cubales & Andrade, 2020). The Journal of Ethnic Studies Pedagogies (JESP) serves as a counter-archive to the dominant narratives that strip bilingual education of its radicality. We uplift the ways educators, community organizers, and scholars engage in abolitionist teaching (Love, 2019), ancestral knowledge systems (Sandoval et al., 2016), and (anti/de)colonial pedagogies to dismantle oppressive schooling structures and build liberatory educational futures.

In the spirit of JESP, we invite scholar-activists and communities who are navigating the intersections of bilingual education and ethnic studies to heed the words of Eve Tuck (2011) who helps to guide critical questions for this special issue:

What does it mean to enact ethnic studies curriculum, practices/pedagogies and community-centered work that rematriate language practices in ancestral knowledges for the liberation of communities of Color?

In honoring the epistemic diversity foundational to Ethnic Studies, and the imaginative practices of communities who have always dreamed beyond domination, we invite contributions that embody creative world-building, joy-centered pedagogy, and cultural resurgence who seek to publish scholarly research, practitioner research, curricula or lesson studies, teacher and student narratives, poetry, visual art, archival histories, creative writing, and photography. Our peer-review process will be guided by an ethic of mentorship and collective care, ensuring that our journal remains accountable to the movements and communities from which Ethnic Studies emerged.

This issue of Ethnic Studies Pedagogies is especially interested in submissions that speak to the following, but not limited to:

- Migrant counterstories as pedagogical tools that resist assimilation and affirm diasporic identities through culturally sustaining, community-rooted language education.
- Asian American efforts in heritage language maintenance and revitalization as anti-colonial praxis that challenge racialized tropes and uplift intergenerational linguistic knowledge.

[1] *"Herstory" is a term used to describe the lived experiences from the perspective of femme-identfying people. In a study by Barton (2022), an educational third space was cultivated where Black femme multilingual children were empowered to examine and share their lived experiences.*

- Critical Race Theory approaches to multilingualism as resistance against linguistic subordination and erasure, emphasizing community sovereignty in language education.
- Black and African diasporic language practices framed through culturally sustaining pedagogies and liberatory linguistics that disrupt dominant language hierarchies.
- Indigenous epistemologies that guide language revitalization and rematriation, centering sovereignty, ancestral knowledge systems, and intergenerational transmission outside settler-colonial frameworks.
- Ethnic Studies frameworks that support communities of Color in reconnecting to their creation stories and ancestral lineages through pedagogies rooted in cultural memory, land, and intergenerational knowledge transmission.
- Community-based language education and third-space pedagogies that position language, identity, and culture as dynamic, co-constructed, and foundational to self-determination.
- Frameworks that center Ethnic Studies as integral to multilingual education, reclaiming the classroom as a space of resistance, joy, and radical possibility.
- Ethnic studies pedagogies in multilingual settings where anti-/decolonial and abolitionist lenses are employed for children birth - 12th grade.
- Interdisciplinary collaborations between educators, artists, and community organizers that explore language justice through storytelling, cultural production, and political education.

SUBMISSION PROCESS

We invite authors to submit a **500-word proposal by February 28th, 2026**, detailing contributing authors, methodological approaches, and how the proposed work aligns with the issue's theme and the broader vision of *Ethnic Studies Pedagogies*. Proposals will be reviewed by the Lead Editors and receive formative feedback, including clarifying questions and an editorial decision either inviting or declining a full manuscript submission.

Full manuscript submissions will be reviewed on a rolling basis, but **manuscripts stemming from early proposals will receive review priority**. All full manuscripts, including those submitted independently of a proposal, **must be received by August 15th, 2026**. All manuscripts should contribute to a living archive of ethnic studies pedagogies in all its forms, written from and for anti-racist, decolonial, and rehumanizing movements both inside and outside K-12 contexts.

Please consult the Submissions guidelines in our journal website for more detailed information: http://ethnicstudiespedagogies.org/SUBMISSIONS/

Email submissions in Word format to:

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