

La dualidad de ser tanto opresor como oprimido en diferentes lugares

The duality of being both oppressor and oppressed in different places

Evelyn Verónica Almeida García

Universidad Central del Ecuador

Universidad de la Fuerzas Armadas ESPE, Ecuador

Autor para correspondencia: evalmeida@uce.edu.ec

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Resumen

El propósito principal de este artículo es ofrecer una perspectiva diferente de un opresor y una persona oprimida y comprender mi propia realidad a través de mi propia experiencia. Esta dualidad me hace una persona con características únicas. Características que en ocasiones me hacen privilegiada como mestizo y una persona que comúnmente oprime, explota y gobierna a otros con fuerza económica y social. Por otra parte, otras situaciones me convierten en una persona colonizada que se caracteriza por ser dependiente y oprimida cuando estoy en la posición de mujer latina en los Estados Unidos. Me gustaría pensar en mí como una mujer que está dispuesta a "desarrollar [mi] poder para percibir críticamente la forma en que [yo] existo en el mundo con el cual y en el cual [yo] me encuentro" (Freire, 2000, p. 12). Me gustaría ver este mundo como una realidad en un proceso de transformación.

Palabras claves: dualidad; opresor; oprimido; latino; mestizo; migración; dominante

Abstract

The main purpose of this article is to offer a different perspective of an oppressor and an oppressed person and to understand my own reality through my own experience. My reality is that I am a mestizo from Ecuador, and in Ecuador mestizo is the dominant and "preferred" ethnicity. This duality makes me a person with unique characteristics. Characteristics that on occasion make me privileged and a person who commonly oppresses, exploits, and rules others with economic and social force. On the other hand, other situations make me a colonized person who is characterized by being self-depreciated, dependent, and masochist when I am in the position of Latino woman in the United States. I would like to think about myself as a woman who is willing to "develop [my] power to perceive critically the way [I] exist in the world with which and in which [I] find myself" (Freire, 2000, p.12). I would like to see this world as a reality in a process of transformation.

Key words: duality; oppressor; oppressed; Latino; mestizo; migration; dominant

Introduction

“Looking at the past must only be a means of understanding more clearly what and who they are so that they can more wisely build the future.” Paulo Freire

I thought that topics such as hegemony, racism, discrimination, white supremacy, and oppression did not have much to do with me or with the life that I was living. However, after reading *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Memmi, 1991), *Black Feminist Thought* (Collins, 2000), *Schooling in Capitalist America* (Bowles & Gintis, 1976), *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 2000), *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria* (Tatum, 2003) and articles such as “Rethinking Racism” (Bonilla-Silva, 1997) and “Globalization of White Supremacy” (Allen, 2001), I have realized that Critical Race Theory, Critical Pedagogy, Social Reproduction, Resistance Theory, and issues with power and race offer a critical perspective of educational, social, and race inequality, which perpetuate over generations and affect everyone. I have also found out that I was immersed and involved with these issues in more than one way. In this paper, I would like to talk about my positionality as a mestizo oppressor in my home country and also as an oppressed Latina in the United States.

The main purpose of this article is to offer a different perspective of an oppressor and an oppressed person and to understand my own reality through my own experience. As Collins (2000) has stated, “[T]he primary responsibility for defining one’s own reality lies with the people who live that reality, who actually have those experiences” (p. 35). My reality is that I am a mestizo from Ecuador, and in Ecuador mestizo is the dominant and “preferred” ethnicity. This duality makes me a person with unique characteristics. Characteristics that on occasion make me privileged and a person who commonly oppresses, exploits, and rules others with economic and social force. On the other hand, other situations make me a colonized person who is characterized by being self-depreciated, dependent, and masochist when I am in the position of Latino woman in the United States. I would like to think about myself as a woman who is willing to “develop [my] power to perceive critically the way [I] exist in the world with which and in which [I] find myself” (Freire, 2000, p.12). I would like to see this world as a reality in a process of transformation.

Before analyzing this duality, it is imperative to define concepts proper to this topic. Collins (2000) offers a definition of oppression as “any unjust situation where, systematically and over a long period of time, one group denies another group access to the resources of society” (p. 4). She also believes that “Race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, age, and ethnicity among others constitute major forms of oppression in the United States” (p. 4). Memmi (1991) considers that oppression is “the greatest calamity of humanity. It diverts and pollutes the best energies of man-oppressed and oppressor alike.” (p. xvii). In addition, colonial racism is built from three major ideological components: “one the gulf between the culture of the colonialist and the colonized; two, the exploitation of these differences for the benefit of the colonialist; three, the use of these supposed differences as standards of absolute fact” (p. 71).

Referring to education, Freire (2003) creates a concept of the “banking of education,” where:

Knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider they know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as process of inquiry. (p.72)

Bowles and Gintis (1976) also focused on the idea of the inequality of education when they argued that, “the U.S. educational system works to justify economic inequality and to produce a labor force whose capacities, credentials, and consciousness are dictated in substantial measure by the requirements of profitable employment in the capitalist economy” (p. 151). Michael Katz stated as far back as 1880 that “American education had acquired its fundamental structure characteristics” and that these structures “have not altered since.” Katz continues, “Public education was universal, tax-supported, free, compulsory, bureaucratically arranged, class based, and racist” (As cited in Bowles & Gintis, 1976, 153). Tatum (2003) on the other hand believes that “stereotypes, omissions, and distortions are a preconceived judgment or opinion, usually based on limited information” (p.5). Tatum also compares racism to smog in the air, when she says that:

Cultural racism – the cultural images and messages that affirm the assumed superiority of Whites and the assumed inferiority of people of color – is like smog in the air. Sometimes it is so thick it is visible, other times it is less apparent, but always, day in and day out, we are breathing it in. (p.5)



Picture 1. Indigenous selling candies in Quito.

Dominance of Mestizos

According to the online dictionary, mestizo is a a person of mixed racial or ethnic ancestry. In Latin America is a mixed between American Indian and European descent. The indigenous people, their rights, and their situation as a minority group in Ecuador have not been topics of discussion in my country. The Population and Housing Census of 2010 showed that the mestizo population in Ecuador was 71.9% and indigenous people accounted for 7.1%. The data shows that mestizos are the dominant ethnic group in Ecuador. The mestizo group, which I am part of, influences and oppresses the indigenous groups. Paradoxically, even though the indigenous people are natives in the region, they are treated as foreigners in their own homeland.

These minority groups, for example, Puruhá, Otavalo, Karanki, Cañaris, Cofanes, and the Huaorani, amongst others, have been subjects of discriminatory events throughout history. These people have been oppressed in different ways such as having limited access to education, basic services, work, language, territory, and culture. Oppression of these sociocultural aspects have resulted in a loss of identity for indigenous people. As Memmi mentioned, the assumption is that the colonizers’ living standards are high, while the colonizers are low. This assumption results in the oppressors attempts to enculturate the oppressed into the supposed dominant culture, and, as

a result, indigenous people are treated as low-class citizens, deprived from political and civil rights and services.

Since the colonization of Ecuador by the Spanish began in the late 1500's, indigenous people suffered through this enforced enculturation and loss of their ethnic identity. Now, in this period of post colonization, many Ecuadorians still have that mentality of separating the indigenous into the colonized and the mestizo into the colonizer. An example is what happened with the indigenous people during the Agrarian Reform and Colonization in 1964. This reform had an original objective of a set of political, economic, and social policies whose that offered the indigenous people bigger portions of lands for agricultural production. It also offered them social security and loans to continue their agriculture production. However, the reality was different; the reform helped the people in power by offering them productive lands and giving the indigenous people infertile lands. The indigenous people had debts that they could not pay and became poorer and poorer.

Education has also been an issue for indigenous people in Ecuador over the time. There is a minimum population of indigenous accessing education; very few of them manage to graduate and have a job and decent work. We are used to seeing indigenous children of the streets selling candies, seasonal fruit, and flowers like the people in picture 1. These children do not go to school. The ones that manage to go to school are likely to live in poverty and experience the highest school dropout rates. They usually stay home and help their parents in their work instead of going to school. Other children work in the homes of mestizos as house cleaners, but even positions do not pay well.

Because of the lack of access to quality education, Indigenous people usually are domestic workers and construction workers. Indigenous people are seen as an underclass not equal to the mestizos. It is common to see that mestizo group can benefit from the low rate labor of the indigenous people, who in many occasions are exploited and are not protected from the laws in Ecuador. I am sorry to recognize that my house has been one example of this situation. We have had some indigenous maids who have helped in the house cleaning, washing the clothes, cooking, and helping with the children. Collins' (2000) comments on these types of arrangements when she mentions that domestic work is profoundly exploitative and that there is a unique relationship between the employer and employee. As a participant in this exploitative structure, I am reminded of "Maria" the maid who used to work for us for many years. I remember she used to call me "Señorita Evelyn" and my mother "Señora Luisa," which is a formal addressing. We had a very good relationship, especially because Maria used to take care of me and my two brothers for many years. We used to give her used clothes and other household items. She even used to wear a uniform and an apron. Now, I have realized that all of these actions just highlighted the economic and social inequality separating the domestic workers and the employers.

Talking to my friend, Ana, about my essay, an interesting anecdote came into play. One of her classmates from elementary school had a very common indigenous last name. His last name "Ninagualpa" was an object of bullying, not from his friends in school but outside of it. Ana saw him after several years. And to her surprise, he had changed his last name for his mother's last name, which had been, of course, a Spanish last name "Chavez." He also changed

his first name. This is an example of how the psychology of this person worked and how ashamed he was to be an indigenous descendent. He gave away his identity to fit in this dominant “mestizo” group. He reinvented himself to be a person that he was not.

The inequality of arrangements such as the one from my childhood extend beyond the mestizo/indigenous duality in Ecuador and can be found in many colonized and postcolonized societies. Collins (2000) remarks on this when she asks the question “If women are allegedly passive and fragile, then why are Black women treated as “mules” and assigned heavy cleaning chores” (p. 11)? In Ecuador, indigenous people are treated the same way. If they are not working as domestic workers, they are going in the fields and farm or helping their husbands in constructions sites.

Exacerbating the oppression they experience, indigenous people are also segregated geographically. Quito, for example, which is the place I lived in, is divided in three sectors geographically. There is the south, the center, and the north. People who live in the north and part of the central of Quito are assumed to have money and have a better life style. On the other hand, the poor people and the indigenous people generally live in the south and suburbs of the city. They are segregated not only by the people that live in the north, but also from the government and the authorities. While the North and North Central portions of the city enjoy successful governance and the luxuries provided by well-dispersed taxes and services, the places where the indigenous people live in Quito lack basic services such as drinking water, sewage, electricity, and garbage disposal.

There is a social pressure in Ecuador influenced by mestizos against indigenous people. Because of that, many indigenous people give away their culture, including their way of dressing and their language. One vivid example is that mestizos speak Spanish and do not recognize Quichua, which is an indigenous language, as an official language. In schools, indigenous children are forced to speak Spanish and English. Additionally, indigenous people had to give away their religion. For example, in Ecuador the indigenous celebrations have been mixed with the Spaniard traditions such as Fiesta de la Mama Negra in Latacunga, Ecuador. It starts with a traditional mass and an indigenous parade, which includes masks, adorned with dead animals, bottles of wine and liquor, dancers and music. It is a mix between Catholic and pagan celebrations. This is just one example of the influence that the Spanish colonizers have had on indigenous religions.

Indigenous people in Ecuador constitute the oppressed group, while the oppressor group are the mestizos. As a mestizo, there are several ways in which I somehow have used my privilege as a member of the dominant group against the ingenious people. We know that there are differences but no one wants to face it. No one stands out for the minority. Now that I am aware of my privilege. I do not deny it, but neither use it against the people that are in minority groups. It is necessary to put ourselves in the shoes of other people in order to understand what they are going through so we do not misjudge or stereotype them. Privilege should not determine anyone’s outcomes. Mestizos are the majority in Ecuador, but that does not mean they have to be oppressors against the indigenous people. They are part of our past, present and future and should be respected and treated as equal.

Oppression of Latinos

Being a Latino woman in the United States has made me become part of the minority, part of the oppressed group. There are several examples that show discrimination against my group. For instance, the moment I entered the University and went to the Student Union Building or to a dining hall, I noticed that every person cleaning the tables or cleaning the bathrooms were Mexican or Hispanic decedents. This division of labor where the oppressed are the ones in menial labor was apparent even here, in the United States. Another example came on the first day of class. I wanted to print some of the essays for my Seminar class and I did not know how to use the printer located on the first floor of the SUB, so I asked a cleaning lady and she answered me in Spanish and told me that she was from Mexico. I also went to the dining hall and met Carlos, an Ecuadorian person who cleans there. For the students, these workers are invisible; they are just labor force whose job is only limited to cleaning. This situation reminded me about a sentence from Collins (2000), which stated the situation of African American woman in the United States. Collins states, "This group treatment potentially renders each individual African American woman invisible as fully human" (p. 100). I felt so sad and also discriminated because that could also have been my brother or family.

Latino women have a higher percentage of suffering from discrimination and abuse, not only from white people but also from Latino men. I have heard this issue from many sources such as news, TV, internet, and even from people who have seen these types of abuse first hand. One example is a nurse, who we are going to call Teresa. She comes to my house every Thursday to check on my daughter. She has seen how Latino men mistreated Latino women verbally and physically in Albuquerque, NM. She even had to go to court and support these women. One story that almost made me cry was that of a Mexican immigrant who had just given birth and her husband hit her. She was so afraid to go to court because her husband threatened her. Additionally, the judge told her that if she did not attend to the hearing he was going to take her kid from her because she was not strong enough to defend herself and her child. These stories are every day stories of Latino women in the United States. And the cases are even worse when they are illegal immigrants. In a 2015 article in the Spanish language periodical *New Herald*, it was presented that 1 out of 12 Latinas in Chicago have experienced domestic violence in the last 12 months. It further described that married immigrant women are more likely to be abused than single women, particularly during the period of pregnancy. Also, the news article reported that these abused women rely less on police and prefer to go to their friends, families, or neighbors for help.

Another example of privilege and power was when I was going to a dinner at a Christian church. I saw something that got me thinking about how unconsciously we as parents help perpetuate the inequality and the differences of classes, gender, and race. There was a young white boy around 12 years old who was wearing a suit and tie and behaved very properly. This boy, who I soon realized was the pastor's son, was guiding the catering people, who happened to be Mexicans, with the food for the event. What was shocking to me was the attitude of this boy towards the catering people. It seemed that he knew he was superior and he was ordering them with his fingers and an attitude, demanding the caterers to "put this here," "move this," and "this way." I felt that this boy, because of his young age, should not treat the adult catering people that way. On the other hand, the catering workers seemed that they felt ok with that type of treatment.

Their response was “yes, sir” and “thank you.” The boy did not mistreat the caterers in a physical way; however, it was an unconscious way of stating power and privilege between him and the workers. It appeared to me that this was an example of Freire’s “false generosity” which constrains the fearful and subdues the “rejects of life,” to extend their trembling hands. (2000, p.45) So, though this young white boy was being kind to the workers, his status, his appearance, and his assumed authority over adults was all indicative of unequal power relations based on the assumption that Latinos, immigrants, and non-English speakers are inferior to white, male English speaking residents.



Picture 2. El Nuevo Herald

I have also seen geographic segregation in the town where I have been living. Similar to what Collins (2000) mentioned regarding racial segregation in urban housing, I can see racial segregation occurring in Albuquerque, NM. Latinos live in self-contained Latino communities such as South Valley, and their children attend Latino schools, worship at Hispanic churches, purchase food at Mexican supermarkets, and join Latino-based community organizations. This geographic separation of Latinos to their own communities, schools, and religious centers hinders racial interaction and integration.

Another vivid example of discrimination was what happened to my friend Claudia, an Ecuadorian student at the university. She was pregnant and had a complication. She went to the emergency room at the hospital and had to wait for about 9 hours to be seen. Yes, 9 hours! She lost her baby afterwards. I do not think it would have been the same if she were white or had an English accent as opposed to a Spanish accent. I felt so helpless when I heard of her loss. In my country, this would not have happened. I do not know if the baby could have survived, but I know for sure that the treatment would have been completely different. She would have entered into an intensive care unit immediately because, once again, we have the mestizo privilege back in Ecuador.

When I started to read Tatum’s (2003) book *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* it reminded me of myself and my Ecuadorian friends who are also here studying at the university. We usually sit together during lunch in the SUB because we felt the need to connect with someone who looks like us and share the same experiences. We came to study with a scholarship from the university we worked at back in Ecuador. The education and the university is excellent and we are thankful for that. However, some aspects make us feel segregated and oppressed. We have the feeling that we have lost our identity, our status as professors, and we that we have become mere students. I see how my classmates and I, back in Ecuador, used to have cars, take taxis, dress formally, all of that is gone now. In other words, we had a completely different lifestyle. Here in the United States, we are just “students” to the other people at the university. And, worse, to others outside the university we are just Latino immigrants and not necessary decent. This idea that Latino immigrants are not good people

affected me first hand when myself and a friend of mine went to a Dollar Tree store. They asked us to put our backpacks away, like we are thieves and we were going to steal something. I felt so discriminated against and furious at the same time. How could this happen to us? I am a prestigious university professor in my country, how could they treat me like that?

Another form of oppression as a Latina that I have seen, read, and been told about is the discrimination of language. This discrimination can be seen in different levels, from teachers of elementary school not wanting their students to speak in Spanish, to Hispanic university scholars choosing to publish their research articles in English in North American journals instead of in Spanish and in international journals. Even though there is a high percentage of people whose native language is not English, there is still a strong English-only movement, which are in favor of anti-bilingual education, and this makes it difficult for non-native speakers to be successful in publishing in their home language. The article *Preparing Teachers for Bilingual Students* (Blum Martinez & Baker, 2010) reports that, according to the Pew Hispanic Center in 2007, immigrants accounted for 12.6% of the population of the United States. Additionally, two thirds of the population growth in 2002 came from immigrants (p. 321). Therefore, it is unbelievable that such English-only movements exist. These movements have a great negative impact not only on students, but also on teachers and their professional development. Without bilingual education, Latino students will not be able to perform in the same way as they could in their native language and have a great disadvantage over students whose first language is English.

Even though there is the No Child Left Behind legislation, there are problems that students, teachers, and authorities have to face. While the “system allows for testing English-language learners (ELLs) in their native language, only 11 states have taken advantage of this possibility” (Blum Martinez & Baker, 2010, p. 323). In addition, bilingual programs are easy targets because they are new programs and are not well-formed. Blum Martinez and Baker (2010) stated that “School districts have utilized these funds for other purposes” (p. 333). There is a lack of availability of assessments and materials for native languages. Another problem is that “many bilingual teachers [are] inexperienced and undertrained with a large percentage working on an emergency waiver. Most programs served poor populations, their schools were underfunded and suffered from a high level of teacher transiency” (p. 323). All of these issues come together to keep English as the “dominant” language and jeopardize the use of other languages for socializing, learning, and for doing business.

Because of these personal experiences, I believe that linguistic discrimination, or what Phillipson terms “Linguistic Imperialism” (1992), absolutely exists in the United States. How many times I have heard “I do not understand your accent,” “I do not speak Spanish,” “Sorry I do not understand?” This has happened to me and to several of my Ecuadorian friends who are studying at the university. One vivid example of this linguistic discrimination was when I was going to Human Services to obtain medical service for my little baby. I was with my husband, who does not speak English, and my newborn baby. I would like my husband to understand everything that was going on so I asked the human resources worker if he could speak Spanish. To me he was Hispanic. However, he was irritated and told me that he did not speak Spanish and that they only speak English at the Human Service office. I felt so embarrassed and ashamed of speaking Spanish at that moment. I started to think why Hispanic decedents feel so bad about speaking Spanish and if this is connected to the idea of feeling or wanting to appear “white.” I

did not understand the discrimination of Mexican Americans and Nuevo Mexicanos against Mexican Nationals and other Spanish speaking immigrants. For me, this was so absurd and unbelievable how they refused to speak Spanish.

After asking a Nuevo Mexicano the reason why he did not speak Spanish, I started to connect this situation to “the concept of linguistic imperialism where Phillipson believes that there is a “very strong case for claiming that English Language Teaching and the intellectual tradition behind it are neo-colonialist” (p.72). In order to preserve English as a dominant language, Phillipson focuses on fallacies including the monolingual fallacy that English is best taught without reference to learner’s native language; the native speaker fallacy that the best teacher is a speaker from one of the center countries; the early start fallacy, which states that the earlier a language is learnt the better is mastered; the maximum exposure fallacy, in which the more English one comes into contact with the better it is learnt; and the subtractive fallacy, which stated that the less a student speaks other languages the better their English will become (Personal communication, May 5, 2016). The Nuevo Mexicano explained to me that when his grandparents came from Mexico they entered school in New Mexico and it was forbidden to speak in Spanish. Children were punished and even physically assaulted by their teachers for speaking in Spanish. So in school kids were not allowed to speak Spanish and at home their parents only spoke Spanish when they did not want their children to understand what they were saying. Parents agreed that speaking Spanish was negative for their children’s future. The parents thought that their children would be discriminated against for speaking another language and that speaking Spanish would make them less American-like.

Another kind of discrimination that I have seen is when Spanish speakers want to publish in American, or so called “Western,” journals. Swales (1997) remarked on the monopolization of English language in American academic journals. In his article, he stated, “English is a Tyrannosaurus rex... English is a powerful carnivore gobbling up the other denizens of the academic linguistic grazing grounds” (p. 374). Giddens (as cited in Swales, 1997, p. 376) calculates that in 1994 no less than 31 percent of all papers published in mainstream journals emanated from the USA, and a very little percentage from countries where English is not the native language. This fact also supports the realistic view of Swales about the domination of the English language in journals. From my own experience, non-native speakers are discriminated against when trying to publish papers. According to Li (as cited in Belcher, 2007, p.3) 80 percent of non-native English speakers felt disadvantaged in competition with their native-English speaking counterparts. It seems to me that this underestimation of their language abilities, conscious or unconscious, is affecting the writers’ performance in a negative way. Even before writing, we see that we have a disadvantage, whether this is true or not.

International journals require specific conventions strictly related to native-speakers of English. If non-native speakers, like myself, have to publish in these international journals, there are two options. The first one is to cope with it, and try to acquire this journal-writing discourse and pay attention to audience, topic, purpose, literature review, methods, results, discussion, pedagogical implications, and language use (Belcher, 2007). The second option is to fight for changes. These changes are that journals carefully choose international reviewers, that reviewers provide constructive critiques even if the papers are rejected, and, for me the most important

change, that “editors and reviewers begin to rethink the standard text convention and even variety of English privileged in English-language journals” (Belcher, 2007, p.19).

As a Latina English teacher, whose first language is Spanish, I also felt discrimination from on my native speakers’ counterparts, students, teaching institutions, and community. In my own experience, there is a struggle to teach English as an international language. Holliday (2005) explores this struggle between native and non-native speakers of English. In terms of location, Holliday defines “Western centre” as the well-resourced countries, which have economic and political power, which are the dominant ones, and the others are the “periphery” which are the countries that possess limited resources and are under in a sense the domain of the west, in my case, Ecuador.

The other point is to be aware of the implications that bring power and privilege of the English-speaking West in the “chauvinistic” TESOL world. Holliday believes that “non” usually implies disadvantage and deficit; this means that English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers have a disadvantage when referred to as “non-native” speakers of English, and, while this disadvantage is language based, it is heightened by the chauvinism in TESOL. With this premise, I am double-discriminated, first because I am a non-native speaker and come from a peripheral country, and second because I am a woman. There is no doubt that when teaching English as a second or foreign language, students, parents, institutions prefer to hire native speakers of the language.

Even colleagues discriminate ESL and EFL teachers; there is a professional division between English-speaking West and non-natives in ways such as prejudice, identity, professional status, employability, and cultural problems in language learning. Holliday (2005) describes “non-native speakers’ students and colleagues as dependent, passive, docile, lacking in self-esteem, reluctant to challenge authority, and easily dominated. While, he argues, native speakers are” independent, autonomous, creative, respect freedom, change and equality” (p. 175). Even though English is a foreign language to many, it is a dominant language around the globe. The native speaker of English is, therefore, the norm. Native speakers are valued but they are not considered “custodians” of the English language. Instead, it is often the non-native speaker who have to do the “dirty work” or learning and teaching English to non-native speakers. While doing this already labor-intensive work, the non-native speaker must also provide credentials of their professionalism on a daily basis. The teacher is a native speaker, who brings her English and culture to the uninitiated environment. The teacher has theories of exotic foreign cultures. “It is not possible to label someone as a “foreigner” or a “non-native” as believe that he or she has equal rights to the language” (Holliday, 2005, p.6). With all of these negative prejudices, there is no doubt that non-native teacher such as myself feel discriminated. Holliday (2005) advises that “English-speaking Western colleagues, who become no more than speakers of a dominant variety of English must rethink and problematize their entire role, and exactly what it is that they can contribute and to whom” (p.15). He also believes that it is imperative to “seek a deeper understanding of individual people’s identity by avoiding preconceptions, appreciating complexity, not over-generalizing from individual instances” (Holliday, 2005, p. 174).

Conclusion

It has been very difficult to position myself as a mestizo oppressor as well as an oppressed Latino woman. However, it was necessary in order to understand my reality and myself. As Tate (1983) said, “You have to understand what your place as an individual is and the place of the person who is close to you. You have to understand the space between you before you can understand more complex or larger groups” (as cited in Collins, 2000, p. 112). Now I can say that I understand my own reality as an oppressor and an oppressed person. I know what it is like to discriminate and to be discriminated. In my position of a dominant mestizo, I had a dilemma inside my head that Freire (2000) explained very well as an internal conflict. This conflict stems from choosing “between human solidarity and alienation, between following prescriptions or having choices, between being spectator or actor, between speaking out and being silent” (p. 48). Now what I can say that I have chosen to fight against injustice, to show true solidarity, to stand for the indigenous people in my country. I wish to develop a positive mestizo identity based on the truth, not on phony superiority.

However, I believe that it is not enough. According to Tatum (2003) a developmental process must take place. The six stages are contact, disintegration, reintegration, pseudo-independent, immersion/emersion, and autonomy. In my personal case, I honestly believe I am in the second stage. I have passed the denial phase of not paying attention to the significance of my racial identity. I do not use the speech of color-blind or free of prejudice. Now I am aware of my privilege as a mestizo, and I do not mean to use it against anyone. I have a long way to go. Meanwhile, I, as a teacher, am going to work with my students to help them discover themselves and become co-investigators and re-creators of a new critical education that becomes “the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world” (Freire, 2000, p.34). I will also try to help my fellow compatriots overcome their fears and anger for being discriminated or abused. Finally, I know there is still a long way to walk, but it is a good start.

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