

Exploring the Evaluation of Educators' Cultural Competency: Constructing an Appropriate Model

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This study used the Beliefs About Language Survey developed by Fitzsimmons-Doolan in 2011, to investigate the psychometric attributes of scores derived from its administration to 295 future teachers at a rural-urban university in the United States. The initial data analysis revealed a discrepancy between the model's expected fit and the empirical data, suggesting inadequacies within the structure of the survey. Findings revealed the need to develop a revised and abbreviated instrument. The new instrument proposed in this research is tailored to capture the nuances within the language ideologies held by future teachers and how these shape their disposition and instructional practices. We report on the iterative process that we used to refine the measurement precision and enhance the 2011 instrument's reliability and validity. We propose that the revised survey instrument offers a more comprehensive and accurate picture of future teachers' language-related beliefs and teaching practices.

Keywords: Language Ideologies, Future Teachers, Culturally Responsive Instruction, Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Introduction

Across the globe, unprecedented levels of global migration have impacted student demographics in many nations (International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2021). Data reported by IOM (2021) revealed 59 million immigrants arrived in North America, accounting for 21% of all global immigrants for that year in this region. During this same period, Asia and Europe together received 61% of the world's immigrants. Approximately 86 million settled in Asia and 87 million in Europe. These data demonstrate the need to prepare future educators who will be equipped to deliver culturally responsive instruction (CRI) to learners who represent numerous origins, ethnicities, and language backgrounds (Bennett, 2019; García et al., 2021; Gay, 2013; González et al., 2005; Greene, 2018; Pang, 2018; Saqipi & Vogrinc, 2021). Culturally responsive educators demonstrate their belief in students' rights to interact using their communities' languages (Alfaro & Bartolomé, 2023; Flores & Mc Auliffe, 2020; García et al., 2021; Pappa & Moate, 2021; Ruiz, 1984). In these teachers' classrooms, students succeed.

In the United States (U.S.), data reported by the National Center for Education Statistics (2022) has consistently documented increases in the diversity of learners

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enrolled in the nation's public schools (Institute of Education Sciences [IES], 2022). Between 2010 and 2019 the percentage of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) learners increased from 9.2% to 10.4% overall (IES, 2022). Hispanic enrollment increased from 11 to 13.8 million by the fall of 2021, reflecting an overall increase of 2.8 million students. The data reported to IES by the states of Texas, California, New Mexico, Nevada, Illinois, Rhode Island, Alaska, Washington, Delaware, Colorado, Maryland, and Massachusetts revealed that for those regions of the U.S., 10% or more of students were CLD, and of those, 76.8% or 3.9 million were of Hispanic descent. The aforementioned demographics suggest the urgent need to develop a model to assess future teachers' ideologies and readiness to meet the schooling needs of diverse learners. During the past 30 years, decision-makers in the U.S. have taken steps to prepare educators to deliver CRI through the enactment of legislation. Efforts date back to the Education America Act (H.R. 1804), the No Child Left Behind in 2002 (Klein, 2015), and Every Student Succeeds Act (Klein, 2016).

Faculty in teacher preparation programs became aware that future teachers largely represented monolingual Caucasian females (Banks, 2014; Nieto, 2018). Teacher trainers saw that while the student demographic continued to diversify, the teacher preparation curriculum had failed to require candidates to spend more time planning, delivering, and evaluating the adequacy of the instructional methods being used to teach CLD learners (Smith, 2020). An increased focus on fieldwork was needed to adequately prepare future teachers to address CLD learners' academic needs (Smith et al., 2020). As well, the need to monitor and effectively evaluate future teachers' readiness for the teaching profession became evident (Fitzsimmons-Doolan, 2011; Freire, 1985; Gay, 2014; González et al., 2005; Ruiz, 1984; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

The Evolving Debate about Language Ideologies

Research focused on ideologies began in the 1940s and increased over time. This growing body of scholarship extended into disciplines such as literacy, anthropology, philosophy, sociocultural studies, and educational policy, highlighting the complex nature of the beliefs that shape an individual's ideological stance (Knight, 2006). Huntington (1957) proposed what many considered a discriminatory definition of ideology: "a system of ideas concerned with the distribution of political and social values and acquiesced on by a significant social group" (p. 454). Knight (2006) opposed Huntington's proposition that an ideology is a set of coherent and stable attitudes that do not extend beyond political philosophy. Irvine (1989) offered an expanded definition of ideology that included culture and language as part of understanding the sociocultural context as the "cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests" (p. 255). Cavanaugh (2019) proposed that language ideologies are wider than the circle of influence of the individual who holds the ideology. He posited that ideological stances reveal factors of "how systems of power are organized" (p. 6).

Shohamy (2006) suggested that the sanctioned use of select languages in a country evidence societal assumptions about language status; and therefore, result

in privileged practices in schools. Jaffe (2011) stated that “ideologies and practice are mutually constitutive” (p.10). Teachers’ ideologies shape the pedagogy, instructional materials, and linguistic and cultural resources used in classrooms (Alfaro & Bartolomé, 2023; Fasching-Varner et al., 2019; García et al., 2021). Rosa and Burdick (2017) indicated that ideology research has “moved beyond accounts of language attitudes in sociolinguistics to powerfully theorize linkages among linguistic forms and cultural contexts across interactional, institutional, and political-economic scales” (p. 6). López (2017, 2018) and Alfaro and Bartolomé (2023) documented the connection between teachers’ ideologies and the asset-based pedagogies that leads Hispanic students to achieve at higher academic levels. Flores and Rosa (2015) warned teacher educators about the attitudes perpetuated by racialized literacy ideologies. Shleppegrell and Colombi (2002) suggested that educators must espouse culturally responsive ideologies to create learning contexts based on social justice paradigms. Baca (2024) documented clear differences in how teachers understood and leveraged their bilingualism and support for students’ biliteracy development. These differences influenced the extent to which each teacher advanced or limited culturally responsive, equity centered practices. In 2011, Fitzsimmons-Doolan (2011) developed an instrument to investigate the link between ideological ideas and language ideologies. Later, when Fitzsimmons-Doolan et al. (2017) conducted additional research with administrators and teachers in Texas, the findings suggested that future teachers’ language ideologies required further examination before conclusions about the influence of these on educational practice could be drawn.

Language Ideologies and Initial Teacher Certification

The Teachers to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) organization (2018), provides a set of standards for teacher preparation. The goal of TESOL is to prepare teachers across the world to validate the rights of learners to be plurilingual and pluricultural. The TESOL standards delineate what teachers need to know when planning curriculum and interacting with students and families; however, the standards do not provide an assessment tool to measure future teachers’ language ideologies. The dispositions of future teachers are expected to be evaluated by teacher educators; however, extant research has not provided an instrument that adequately examines candidates’ language ideologies (Gay, 2014; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Language Ideologies in the Teacher Preparation Curriculum

Providing future teachers with opportunities to reflect on their language ideologies throughout their program of study is essential to fostering caring and responsive professionals (Cross et al., 2001; Henderson, 2022; Lindahl & Baecher, 2015). Deacon (2002) proposed that candidates who examine their ideologies during and after interactions with students, may be better positioned to recognize and critically reflect on the positive, negative, and neutral stances underlying their perspectives and

practices. Researchers have suggested that when future teachers participate in clinical experiences, they become aware that academic achievement improves when the K-12 curriculum draws on learners' funds of knowledge (González et al., 2005) and mirrors students' histories and cultures (Jiménez, 2021; Ramos Pellicia, 2020). Self-reflection after observations and interactions with diverse learners has been shown to help future teachers identify effective teaching methods (Barbosa, 2020; Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Vogrinc & Saqipi, 2023). When readings in the teacher preparation coursework lead to foster engaging and honest discussions, future teacher will be ready to evaluate if their attitudes mirror societal assumptions. Butler (2021) suggests that reflection fosters the development of teachers knowledge base, enabling them to integrate informed beliefs into teaching practices. Parsons (1991) proposed that conflicts revealed in self-examinations may bring to the surface *cognitive distortions* that stem from candidates' realization of disconnects between theory and practice. Today's levels of global migration (IOM, 2021) leave no doubt that future teachers need time to examine their language ideologies as they learn about social justice and liberatory models of education (Burgin & Daniel, 2017; Coney, 2016; Freire, 1985; Liddicoat & Taylor-Leech, 2015; Vidović & Domović, 2019).

Medfield University's Teacher Preparation Program

Coursework and clinical experiences are the foundation of Medfield University's (MU) teacher preparation program. Throughout the program, students' time spent in clinical placements increases. In the last year of study, the students are in sole charge of a K-12 classroom. To maintain TESOL accreditation for the program, faculty engage in continuous assessment of the teacher preparation curriculum in two ways. First, they monitor the development of cultural responsiveness in the college classroom during class discussions. Secondly, each course has a culminating project that requires lesson planning that demonstrates a developing ability to link theory and practice.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws on the linguistic anthropology theory proposed by Michael Silverstein (1979). Silverstein defined language ideologies as "sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use" (p. 193). His research focused on the influence of language ideologies on language structures. Silverstein found that select linguistic forms assume and sustain values such as egalitarianism and flat hierarchies, thereby contributing to the maintenance of social structures favored by the majority culture. Other researchers have cautioned that language ideologies can perpetuate inequality and reinforce hegemonic structures related to access, authority, legitimacy, and identity (Bauman & Briggs, 2003; Blommaert, 2005; Duchêne & Heller, 2007; Gal & Irvine, 2019; Kroskrity, 2000). Therefore, in this investigation, we engaged in a process to develop an evaluation tool that accurately reveals future teachers' preparation to teach CLD learners. Specifically, we refer to future teachers' views of empowerment (Freire, 1985), their

understanding and commitment to culturally responsive pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2021), and their advocacy for students' language rights (Alfaro & Bartolomé, 2023; Canagarajah, 2011; García & Kleyn, 2019; Ruiz, 1984; Silverstein, 1979).

Methodology

In this research we explored the development of a model to assess teachers' language ideologies and their readiness to teach in diverse pre-K to 12 educational contexts. We evaluated if the constructs proposed by Fitzsimmons-Doolan's ideology survey (2011) were a good fit to examine data gathered from its administration to future teachers at MU. Prior research by Fitzsimmons-Doolan (2011) and Fitzsimmons-Doolan et al. (2017), together with our own data based on the original survey items, served as baseline evidence for the development of a new assessment model.

First, we utilized confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to assess the validity of the dimensional model proposed by Fitzsimmons-Doolan (2011). From this analysis we set out to develop a more concise, efficient, and psychometrically sound instrument for measuring future teachers' language ideologies. The following research questions guided the study:

1. Does the language ideology survey developed by Fitzsimmons-Doolan (2011) show evidence of construct validity when measuring future teachers' language ideologies?
2. If the hypothesized model of language ideologies that we propose to develop does not show a good fit, what modifications to the survey and/or model might show evidence of construct validity?

Participants

Data were collected from 295 undergraduate students attending MU, a rural-urban university in the center region of the U.S. The future teachers were pursuing pre-K to 12 initial teaching certification along with an English as a Second Language teaching credential. To comply with IRB protocols for human subjects research, participants provided written informed consent before completing the survey. Table 1 presents participants' characteristics, including gender, age, completion of teaching requirements, and years of experience teaching CLD learners.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Characteristic	N*	%
Gender		
Female	181	74.2
Male	63	25.8
Language		
English-only	238	84.1
Other language(s)	45	15.9
Age		
18-23 years	220	76.4
24-30 years	39	13.5
31 + years	29	10
Completed Teaching requirements	260	91.2
Level of experience teaching CLD		
No experience	246	85.7
1-3 years	36	12.5
4+ years	5	1.7

Note: * Participants were given the option to skip any question to comply with IRB protocols.

Before data analysis was conducted, inspection for missing data showed that less than 1.88% of the data were missing. Additionally, after data screening, responses to three survey items: Q4, *The use of language is a human right*; Q8, *In the U.S., the use of more than one language should be promoted*; and Q22, *One should be patient with people learning a second language* showed substantial negative skewness, with skewness = -3.45, -2.20, and -2.74, respectively. Missing data and skewness were addressed using full information robust maximum likelihood estimation. Fitted models were assessed using adjusted Satorra and Bentler (2010) statistics.

History of Instruments

In her language ideology research with Arizona voters, Fitzsimmons-Doolan (2011) documented the influence of language ideologies on language policies. She reported findings for dimensions that included seven constructs (KMO = .926) using a survey instrument consisting of 31 survey items. The instrument utilized a six-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree = 6, Agree = 5, Somewhat Agree = 4, Somewhat Disagree = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1). Items were grouped into seven constructs: 17 items highlighted positive (Cronbach's alpha (α) = .943) vs negative (α = .886) views towards monolingualism; three addressed language as a decontextualized formal system (α = .636); two focused on language as a tool (α = .882); five looked at language as a valuable and complex skill (α = .714); three considered language a national unifier (α = .889); two asked about language as a marker of intelligence (α = .544); and the topic of language as a privilege was addressed by one survey item (α = N/A).

Two items from Fitzsimmons-Doolan's (2011) survey were not included in any of the constructs: Q25, *Languages with more speakers are stronger than languages with fewer speakers*, and Q30, *The purpose of learning a new language is to meet people who speak that language*. Four items were included in multiple constructs:

Q11, *Native languages are beautiful* was included under monolingualism versus multilingualism, and *Language as a valuable complex skill*; Q16, *The success of a nation depends on the use of a national language*, Q17, *Language represents national identity*, and Q18, *In the US knowing English helps a person to be American* were reported under the constructs of monolingualism vs multilingualism and language as a national unifier. Three constructs included a low number of items under each construct (two or fewer items per factor): language as a tool included two items, language as a marker of intelligence included two items, and language as a privilege included one item.

Analyses

We employed CFA because this statistical technique allowed us to evaluate the validity of the proposed dimensional structure. Specifically, CFA involved the specification and evaluation of the measurement model, where one or more latent constructs could be indicated by sets of observed variables. Utilizing theoretical and/or empirical work with CFA, the feasibility of the formation of constructs is assessed utilizing data that explicitly serves to statistically test the formation of the latent variables (Field, 2017). This study used the R statistical application (R Core Team, 2022) together with the *lavaan* package (Roseel, 2022) to assess the fit of Fitzsimmons-Doolan's hypothesized model utilizing the data collected from teacher candidates at MU. Based on the research literature and our experiences, we propose a new model and assessment protocol that may yield more reliable and valid measures of future teachers' ideologies toward CLD learners.

Results

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (Stage 1) The initial step in the data analysis process was to conduct CFA to evaluate the construct validity of the scores based on Fitzsimmons-Doolan's (2011) dimensional model. We assessed the correspondence between the observed and model-implied covariance matrices (Costa & Sarmiento, 2019). Maximum likelihood estimation was used, and a correlated factors model fitted. Because one of the dimensions (Language as a privilege) in Fitzsimmons-Doolan's 7-factor model contained only a single item, this factor was omitted, and a 6-factor model fitted.

The results of the CFA yielded $\chi^2_{SB}(331) = 1024.94, p < .001$. The chi-square statistic was statistically significant, and it is important to keep in mind that this statistic is known to be sensitive to sample size in latent variable models (Hu & Bentler, 1999). However, values for the comparative fit index (CFI) and a Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) were 0.682 and 0.636, respectively, indicated poor fit, as values were well below the 0.90 criterion for “adequate” fit and 0.95 criterion for “good” fit proposed by Hu and Bentler (1999). The value of RMSEA was 0.09 and SRMR was 0.10, which were above the respective cutoff values of .06 and .08 suggested

by Hu and Bentler. All variances were positive and most of the factor loadings had absolute values above 0.40; although several fell below this value (Table 2).

Table 2. Factor Loadings and Variances for Fitzsimmons-Doolan Model of Language Ideologies

Factor	Item	Factor Loading	Variance
Monolingualism versus multilingualism	Q1	0.865	0.672
	Q3	0.892	0.684
	Q2	0.862	0.689
	Q20	0.826	0.563
	Q13	0.959	0.679
	Q16	0.814	0.556
	Q18	0.767	0.521
	Q17	0.313	0.216
	Q19	0.489	0.401
	Q12	0.538	0.401
	Q4*	-0.192	-0.281
	Q6*	-0.278	-0.254
	Q11*	0.108	0.115
	Q10*	-0.314	-0.424
	Q5*	-0.294	-0.253
	Q9*	-0.335	-0.406
	Q8*	-0.388	-0.393
Language as a decontextualized, formal system	Q27	1.115	0.899
	Q26	0.896	0.747
	Q28	0.455	0.333
Language as a tool	Q14	1.131	0.857
	Q15	1.053	0.847
Language as a valuable, complex skill	Q22	0.356	0.321
	Q7	0.470	0.548
	Q21	0.291	0.519
	Q31	0.553	0.599
	Q11	0.397	0.421
Language as a national unifier	Q17	0.556	0.384
	Q16	0.558	0.381
	Q18	0.856	0.581
Language as a marker of intelligence	Q24	0.914	0.644
	Q23	1.023	0.699

*Note. Negatively-worded items

Model Development (Stage 2) Given the poor fit of Fitzsimmons-Doolan's model (2011) to the data, in Stage 2, we strove to develop a new model. We selected items from the original instrument that aligned to our review of the literature and to the substantive content of the instrument items. This proposed model consists of four dimensions: 1) language misconceptions, 2) societal assumptions about language, 3) language as an asset, and 4) beliefs about multilingualism. Table 3 shows the hypothesized constructs and their corresponding items.

Table 3. Factors and Corresponding Items for 4-Factor Model of Language Ideologies

Factor	Survey Item	
Language Misconceptions	Q23	One can know a person's intelligence from how he uses a language
	Q26	Languages stay the same over time
	Q27	A language has a one standard form
Societal Assumptions about Language	Q14	In the U. S., using English is important for gaining material wealth
	Q15	In the U. S., using English is important for social gains.
	Q18	In the U. S., knowing English helps a person to be American
Language as an Asset	Q7	A person's linguistic abilities are assets.
	Q9	In the U. S., the use of multiple languages is an economic asset
	Q10	In the U. S., the use of native languages other than English is helpful for sharing tradition
Beliefs about Multilingualism	Q1	The use of more than one language creates social problems
	Q2	The use of more than one language makes social mobility difficult
	Q3	The use of more than one language makes social unity difficult
	Q20	Using one language to complete a task is better than using two languages

To assess the fit of the hypothesized 4-factor model to the collected data, we conducted a CFA analysis. The results of this CFA yielded $\chi^2(48) = 87.79, p < .001$. Observed values of fit indices were CFI = 0.96, TLI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.05, and SRMR = 0.058, indicating good fit of the proposed model to the data. All variances were positive and absolute values of all factor loadings exceeded 0.40 (Table 4). Reliability indices (Omega coefficients) for each factor exceeded 0.70, indicating good internal consistency based on the guidelines provided by Hair et al. (2010). The results provided evidence for the construct validity of this 4-factor model to assess future teachers' language ideologies and the psychometric soundness of the abbreviated form of the instrument.

Table 4. CFA Factor Loadings, Variances, and Reliability Indices for 4-Factor Model of Language Ideologies

Factor	Item	Factor Loading	Variance	Omega (reliability)
Language Misconceptions	Q27	1.055	0.848	.733
	Q26	0.948	0.791	
	Q23	0.696	0.474	
Societal Assumptions about Language	Q14	0.986	0.864	.773
	Q15	1.052	0.830	
	Q18	0.512	0.515	
Language as an Asset	Q9	0.636	0.847	.777
	Q7	0.599	0.716	
	Q10	0.482	0.610	
Beliefs about Multilingualism	Q2	1.027	0.872	.851
	Q3	1.064	0.784	
	Q1	1.032	0.776	

Discussion

This study contributes to theoretical work in the field of language education in several ways. Patterns identified in the data may inform the design of curricula and strengthen the delivery of culturally responsive pedagogy for classrooms of CLD students (Alfaro & Bartolomé, 2023; Fasching-Varner et al., 2019; Pappa & Moate, 2021; Saqipi & Vogrinc, 2021; Smith, 2020). Regarding RQ1, the results indicated that future teachers' responses to Fitzsimmons-Doolan's survey (2011) did not support the theoretical model of language ideology that she proposed nor demonstrate an adequate fit to the data gathered and examined in this study. This discrepancy may reflect the unique characteristics of this study's population or indicate a broader need for model refinement.

Due to the lack of fit of the original model to this study's data, we developed an alternative model and a corresponding abbreviated form of Fitzsimmons-Doolan's survey (RQ2). This alternative model showed a good fit to data collected from the short form of the instrument. This new model, which consists of a reduced number of items, has practical implications for assessing future teachers' ideologies. For example, the short form of the instrument can be administered more efficiently, particularly in active school environments where time and attention are precious commodities. The proposed four-factor model may provide a more concise way of conceptualizing language ideologies. In addition, scores derived from its dimensions could provide opportunities for educational leaders to examine curricula and plan professional development for practicing teachers.

Conclusions

Providing future teachers with opportunities to examine their language ideologies during completion of programs of teacher preparation is essential to fostering compassionate professionals (Cross et al., 2001; Henderson, 2022; Lindahl & Baecher, 2015). As the literature recognizes the pressing need for an assessment tool that accurately evaluates future teachers' readiness to address the affective and academic needs of diverse learners (Bennett, 2019; García et al., 2021; Gay, 2013; González et al., 2005; Greene, 2018; Pang, 2018; Saqipi & Vogrinc, 2021). This is why valid and reliable assessment of future teachers' ideologies is crucial (Alfaro & Bartolomé, 2023; Flores & McAuliffe, 2020; García et al., 2021; Pappa & Moate, 2021; Ruiz, 1984).

All students deserve to learn in equitable learning environments and feel free to use all their languages and cultural norms as integral components of learning. This requires teacher trainers to deliver a cohesive teacher preparation curriculum that integrates theoretical learning with hands-on practice. Additionally, experiential learning opportunities enable candidates to observe the presence or absence of culturally responsive teaching methods that acknowledge the significance of aligning students' funds of knowledge (González et al., 2005) with the socio-cultural context of the classroom (Jiménez, 2021; Ramos Pellicia, 2020).

The items in Fitzsimmons-Doolan survey (2011) reflect a narrow understanding of citizenship in diverse contexts, encompassing the significance of citizenship, cultural rights, the benefits of plurilingualism, and the person's capacity to comprehend and interpret the world. However, specific items (e.g., "One can know a person's intelligence from how he uses a language") require reevaluation concerning issues such as gender neutrality and faulty attempts to address attitudes toward intelligence quotients. Thus, this preliminary work suggests that future studies should scrutinize the item prompts of the new model to ensure participants comprehend the items, what is being measured, and to establish if additional adjustment to the prompts are needed. Hence, future research endeavors should ascertain the validity of responses, using refined item prompts that have been examined to measure the diversity present in classroom contexts.

Implications for the Educational System

Teacher educators want to monitor their students' ideologies and document how this change during completion of their training (Butler, 2021; Vidović & Domović, 2019). Clearly, identification of misalignments between what future teachers perceive to be the goals of programs of teacher preparation and their ideologies, can help teacher educators find ways to resolve their students' cognitive dissonance. Fostering the development of respectful dispositions in future teachers is an urgent need that requires greater attention than it has received. The instrument that we developed contributes to the evaluation and redesign of culturally responsive teacher training curricula.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This study has limitations that should be addressed in further research. The sample size to determine the need and the adequacy of a new assessment model should include a larger and more diverse population from countries beyond the U.S. Although the sample size met minimum requirements for CFA, replicating the analysis with participants from teacher preparation programs in other contexts is necessary to confirm the results of the CFA procedures. Assessing future teachers' ideologies at the beginning, middle, and end points in their program, will yield valuable information about how these evolve during enrollment in specific courses and over the course of an entire program.

Disclosure Statement

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

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