

**Review: Friedrich, Patricia (Ed.) (2023). *The anti-racism linguist, a book of readings*. Multilingual Matters.**

**EMILIA GRACIA**  
Arizona State University

Book review

Received 5 June 2023; accepted after revisions 8 June 2023

**ABSTRACT**

**EN** This text is a review of *The Anti-Racism Linguist: A Book of Readings*, edited by Patricia Friedrich and published in 2023 by Multilingual Matters. The volume features nine distinct chapters written by authors from Brazil, Thailand, Japan, and the United States who, via personal narratives, share their experiences with (anti)racism in teaching, research, and publishing in applied linguistics and other related fields. The authors explain key terminology, concepts, and theories needed to understand and discuss anti-racism in language use. Authors also provide recommendations for change in editorial, research, and pedagogical practices that readers could implement to help counter racism in their contexts.

**Key words:** ANTI-RACISM, APPLIED LINGUISTICS, PEDAGOGY

**ES** El siguiente texto es una reseña de *The Anti-Racism Linguist, A Book of Readings*, editado por Patricia Friedrich y publicado en 2023 por Multilingual Matters. El volumen presenta nueve capítulos distintos escritos por autores de Brasil, Tailandia, Japón y los Estados Unidos que, a través de relatos personales, comparten sus experiencias con el (anti)racismo en la enseñanza, la investigación y la publicación en lingüística aplicada (y campos relacionados). Los autores explican la terminología clave, los conceptos y las teorías indispensables para comprender y discutir el antirracismo en el uso del lenguaje. Los autores también brindan recomendaciones para el cambio en las prácticas editoriales, de investigación y pedagógicas que los lectores podrían implementar para ayudar a contrarrestar el racismo en sus contextos.

**Palabras clave:** ANTIRACISMO, LINGÜÍSTICA APLICADA, PEDAGOGÍA

**IT** Questo testo è una recensione del libro *The Anti-Racism Linguist, A Book of Readings*, curato da Patricia Friedrich e pubblicato nel 2023 da Multilingual Matters. Il volume comprende nove capitoli distinti scritti da autori provenienti da Brasile, Tailandia, Giappone e Stati Uniti i quali, tramite racconti personali, condividono le loro esperienze con l'(anti)razzismo nell'insegnamento, nella ricerca e in pubblicazioni di linguistica applicata (e campi correlati). Gli autori spiegano terminologie, concetti e teorie chiave necessari per comprendere e discutere l'antirazzismo negli usi linguistici. Gli autori inoltre forniscono consigli per cambiamenti nelle pratiche editoriali, di ricerca e pedagogiche che i lettori possano implementare nei loro contesti per aiutare a contrastare il razzismo.

**Parole chiave:** ANTIRAZZISMO, LINGUISTICA APLICATA, PEDAGOGIA

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✉ **Emilia Gracia**, Arizona State University  
Emilia.Gracia@asu.edu

## 1. Overview of the volume

*The Anti-Racism Linguist: A Book of Readings*, edited by Patricia Friedrich, presents nine chapters of content that discuss issues concerning race and language via personal narratives combined with research studies (e.g., autoethnographies and literature reviews). Authored by scholars in the field of applied linguistics, these chapters articulate authors' different perspectives and experiences with language and race in academic contexts where English language teaching is central.

The chapters identify common instances in which linguistic discrimination intersects with race and ethnicity within academic contexts, and the authors call for anti-racist practices to be implemented on an institutional level by pedagogues and scholars. Although all chapters advocate for institutional change through anti-racist pedagogy, they differ in contextual perspectives and author positionality: authors are academics from Thailand, Japan, Brazil, and the United States, who are working either in Brazil or the United States. Each chapter offers unique takeaways and action items for practitioners and scholars to implement in their contexts.

## 2. Individual chapters

Chapter 1, written by the volume editor herself, introduces the book by detailing its purpose and goals, while defining key concepts used throughout the chapters. Friedrich, who also wrote chapters 6 and 9, explains that one purpose of this collection is to bring diverse, personal narratives to the forefront of academic conversations by blending them with more "objective" or "scientific" thought, as Friedrich describes it. Friedrich explains that the authors represented in this volume are individuals who come with a variety of lived professional and personal experiences in the East, West, and Global South. By sharing their experiences in writing, the authors create new knowledge for those interested in anti-racist pedagogical practices. In her introduction, Friedrich gives a brief overview of the book's chapters, raising two important points for readers to consider: 1) the distinction between institutional racism and individual racist practices, and 2) the primary concern and focus of the chapters on historically minoritized populations. Friedrich refers to *institutional racism* as policies, practices, and beliefs that negatively affect minoritized groups of people in their respective institutions or systems (educational, health, residential, etc.), and *individual racism* as racist actions performed by individuals against minoritized groups of people. Friedrich states that in this volume, some authors give examples of both types of racism without stating which they are referring to specifically, and this is because authors frequently engage with both types and move between them frequently. Friedrich also alerts readers to the authors' focus in this volume on historically marginalized populations such Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and other marginalized identities as the primary victims of racism. She notes that some readers may take issue with this if they hold the belief that historically non-marginalized populations (i.e., White, cisgender, heterosexual men) also experience racism and/or discrimination, and she argues that not mentioning this as a possibility is unfair. Other concepts that are defined in this chapter include, but are not limited to: anti-racism, diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, decoloniality, epistemological racism, intersectionality, and linguistic justice. Given Friedrich's clear and comprehensive explanations of key terms and concepts in this chapter, readers are inspired to approach the forthcoming chapters with confidence.

In Chapter 2, Aya Matsuda, a scholar of applied linguistics who specializes in World Englishes, presents Teaching English as an International Language (TEIL) as a pedagogical approach that, if implemented, could decolonize traditional English Language Teaching (ELT) practices. Matsuda begins the chapter with a brief explanation of how her perspective on racism and ELT has taken shape over the years, and how her own identity as a Japanese woman in an Anglo-American academic context has led her to advocate for anti-racist practices in TESOL. She states that until recently, she had refrained from participating in discussions around TESOL and race due to the complexity of the topic and the nuanced language, dichotomies, and essentialization that can surface. Drawing on the work of Pennycook (1994) and Motha (2014), Matsuda reiterates the idea that ELT in itself is an act of colonization, and that although TEIL is not free of colonial roots, it can be utilized to minimize the impact of colonization in English Language Teaching (ELT), as educators adapt their teaching to meet the needs of the students in their context. This can be done by viewing English as an international language, eliminating native speaker standards and preference for native speaker teachers, in addition to providing students with the opportunity to discuss their experiences, as learners of English, with racism. Matsuda argues that by adopting a TEIL framework, educators can help fight racism and bring (some) justice to their learners.

In Chapter 3, Gabriel Nascimento analyzes Frantz Fanon's (2008) view of racism via language as a zone of non-being, and argues that the field of applied linguistics must be committed to anti-racism in order to

eliminate this zone of non-being. Fanon's concept of non-being originates from the idea that modernity and "Western" humanism have positioned the White, Western world as a human zone of being, while racializing and dehumanizing the rest of the world as non-White in a zone of non-being. Nascimento, who identifies as a Black Brazilian scholar of linguistics at a university in Brazil, elaborates on Fanon's work through his own previous research on the positionality of Black English teachers in Brazil and their experiences teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Data show that less than a quarter of EFL teachers in Brazil are Black and that this is due to English language education being accessible to only the wealthiest people in Brazil and the community's negative perceptions of Black EFL teachers' competence. The author discusses the racialization of languages such as Portuguese, French, and English in postcolonial contexts (e.g., Brazil, Martinique, and the United States), reviewing research illustrating how Black individuals must perform White varieties of their national languages in order to progress academically and professionally. Nascimento calls for social justice in ELT in Brazil and beyond, as the findings mentioned above can be compared to the reality of ELT in other postcolonial contexts.

Chapter 4 presents narrative-based research concerning discrimination in language use, teaching, and learning. Chatwara Suwannamai Duran shares her linguistic autoethnography, which touches on several common issues regarding attitudes and perceptions of standard vs. non-standard language use in her native language (Thai) and her second language (English). The author reflects on how her assumptions and attitudes about non-standard varieties of language changed throughout time, from her childhood in Thailand to being an international student in the United States to becoming a researcher and professor of sociolinguistics. Duran acknowledges the negative perceptions of non-standard Thai that she had while growing up and her preference for standard English when she first came to the United States as an international student. She recounts how her exposure to non-standard varieties of English in the United States helped to dissipate her linguistic ignorance, especially after she began to do qualitative research in sociolinguistics and teach courses at a university with a diverse student population. Through her autoethnographic research, Duran found that linguistic ignorance can change with time, as a result of exposure to differences.

In Chapter 5, Clarissa Menezes Jordão, Juliana Zeggio Martinez, and Eduardo Henrique Diniz de Figueiredo, all from the Global South, contribute to an ongoing discussion about racism in the context of Brazilian academia. All three authors are Brazilians who, in a Brazilian context, identify as White, middle-class, cisgender, and educated, and acknowledge their positions of privilege within their societal and professional contexts as applied linguists at a prestigious university. They also acknowledge that their racial identity may be understood differently outside of Brazil, as this social construct varies according to societal context. Each author narrates an anecdote concerning racism in academic contexts. One recounts her experience as an international student where she was one of the few White students in the program. Another tells his story about being a thesis supervisor for a racial studies specialization. Finally, a third discusses her experience of rejection in the realm of publishing in Anglophone academia. All authors concur that they had been nearly oblivious to the role racism and coloniality play in the field until they had their experiences. Zeggio Martinez did not realize what it meant to be White in an unfair world until she studied abroad and was one of the few White students in her cohort. This gave her a perspective on the assumptions she previously held about seeing herself as neutral in an unjust, postcolonial context. Once she realized that she was racially different from her peers, she understood that she had previously always seen herself as part of "the norm" and that this allowed her to be oblivious to the experiences of those who were not White. She listened to stories told by her peers about being Black in a racist world, and how they felt their bodies did not belong in certain places. It was then that she realized that knowledge ought not to be "disembodied," or separated from the body of the knower. Diniz de Figueiredo had to confront the fact that he had ignored the significance of racism in language when asked to supervise a thesis project on the topic. This was when the author had to confront his ignorance on the topic, and it was then that he realized that previously not needing or wanting to know about this topic was, in itself, a privilege he had. Menezes Jordão realized, through an experience where she was rejected for publication, that her English was not "academic enough" for publication purposes. This led her to realize that she had been positioned as a scholar of the Global South, trying to cross the "abyssal lines," defined by Friedrich in the first chapter (citing Santos [2007]) as invisible demarcations that divide social realities into different spaces (Black/White, East/West, etc.). In this case, Menezes Jordão was crossing from the Global South to the Global North, and was denied entry in spite of her privileges in Brazil. The authors conclude by presenting a collective interpretation of what can be gleaned from their narratives. One common theme observed in their narratives is that of invisibility; prior to their experiences, the first two authors had not previously been aware of their visibility as White scholars and the invisibility that students and professors of color experience throughout

their lives. They had separated the embodied experience that people of color suffer in a colonized world from language and education, until they were faced with experiences where they became aware of racism in said context. As the authors point out, however, this is not surprising, as Brazil has a long history of making bodies invisible in order to erase Black and indigenous identity for the sake of a feigning equality. The other common theme between the three authors was that of an abyssal line and Whiteness. Epistemic racism, a form of systemic racism that exists to discriminate against types of knowledge and knowers themselves, was witnessed by the third author when her submission for publication was discarded because her writing did not fit within abyssal lines of the colonized standards of White, Anglophonic academia. The first two authors identified invisible, abyssal lines in their own contexts, created and perpetuated by academic activity. The authors collectively agree that anti-racist work can be done by making abyssal lines visible through inviting other scholars and students to discuss issues of racism and language inside and outside of academia, promoting an anti-racist stance in their work.

Chapter 6, written by the volume editor, presents a discussion about the challenges of being anti-racist while honoring multiple identities. By means of personal narrative, Friedrich explains how race, ethnicity, language, and national origin intersect and shift according to one's location. She describes how her own identity has been perceived by others according to her location and language use therein. The author identifies as a multilingual Latinx scholar of Brazilian origin and European ancestry, who works in a US university context as a professor of applied linguistics. She describes how in various occasions over the years that she has lived in the United States, people have made incorrect assumptions about her identity. For example, at times interlocutors have (mis)identified her as an Anglo-American woman by only seeing her name and written works, and in other contexts as a woman of color, and an immigrant from Brazil among others. She reflects on how interlocutors made immediate judgements about her accent or lack thereof. In academic circles, she may be admired by colleagues for her ability to speak four languages, but when speaking Portuguese in a public space among strangers she may face linguistic prejudice as bystanders may assume that she does not speak English. Positionality is a key concept that the author uses to explain her experiences of fluid identity based on the context and interlocutors. The author acknowledges that although her experiences are not as severe as those of others, it is important to discuss these experiences in order to create spaces for anti-racist dialogue to occur, since being an anti-racism linguist includes expressing ideas that are anti-racist. Friedrich then discusses the discrimination she experienced in her own creative work. The author had written a novel that was set in Brazil; however, the publisher rejected her work on the premises that it was not stereotypically Brazilian enough. She then published her work with a mid-sized publisher and received three awards. She reflects on how large publishers are limited in the scope of work they find acceptable and are willing to publish (i.e., conventional "Western" narratives), and that explains the low percentage of authors of color that get published. She encourages readers to buy books from small and mid-sized publishers and to commend the large publishers when they do publish authors of minoritized groups. The author explains that linguistic discrimination also happens in academia when non-native speakers face rejection from reviewers with comments telling them to go learn more English. It appears that academic journal editors identify non-native speaker mistakes, differentiate them from native speaker mistakes, give harsher criticism to non-native speakers, and reject their work more frequently. If anti-racist linguists are in editorial positions, they can advocate for scholars that face linguistic discrimination. Lastly, the author discusses embodiment in scholarship, stating that when an author states their race, ethnic background, languages, etc., readers can understand the lens through which the scholar speaks, thus calling attention to the idea that these bodily descriptions matter.

In Chapter 7, Tracey McHenry addresses a historically contentious teacher-student interaction in US schools—the use of student names in the classroom—by providing commentary on historical facts and reviewing literature on the topic. The author begins the chapter by acknowledging the politics of naming. She gives, as an example, the political controversy witnessed in the US government's naming of the highest mountain in North America, located in the state of Alaska, the author's home state. The mountain was originally named "Denali" by the Koyukon Athabascans, but was changed to "Mount McKinley", and then back to Denali again in 2015. She affirms that names are a highly important part of a person's identity, as they represent one's heritage language, ethnic, racial, religious background, and even socioeconomic status. The author reminds readers that over the past century new immigrants often anglicized their names upon arriving to Ellis Island, and teachers were encouraged to assign Anglo names to immigrant students so that they would assimilate more easily into Anglo-American culture. The author reviews research studies concerning the discrimination that African Americans face in the workforce when potential employers disregard resumes with names that index

an African American identity. In addition, she reviews research about teacher expectations of student academic success that concluded that teachers are more likely to have lower expectations for students with non-Anglo names, associating them with low socio-economic status and otherness. At the tertiary level, research shows that professors were more likely to answer emails from Chinese students who used Anglo first names, than those who used their Chinese first names. In reviewing the literature and discussing findings such as these, the author concludes that there is much bias and discrimination in practices that involve names. Hence, the author urges teachers to give importance to student names, to let students know that they are encouraged to use the name they want to use, to try to pronounce students' names correctly, and to call them by the names they want to be called. The author mentions various resources for teachers to use. For example, she mentions, "My Name, My Identity," a program in California public schools with a website that includes an online course and resources for teachers to learn about the importance of student names and what they can do in the classroom to promote inclusion and diversity. The author concludes this chapter by stating that anti-racist pedagogues must make students aware of their right to use their names in the classroom, and call them by the names they choose.

Chapter 8 focuses on anti-racist practices in the context of teaching history. Authors Luciana C. de Oliveira (professor of Education in the United States) and Joy Beatty (PhD student of Education in the United States) give examples of what a history curriculum designed from an anti-racist perspective looks like. Before revealing what aspects of a specific history curriculum are considered anti-racist, readers are given short explanations of key concepts that frame an anti-racist perspective of history and the teaching of it. Oliveira and Beatty explain that anti-racist pedagogy is culturally sustaining when educators help students maintain the linguistic and cultural knowledge they inherited (from their communities of origin which have been marginalized) while simultaneously giving students the opportunity to acquire cultural competence in the dominant culture so that they may critique it. The authors refer to the South to mean populations that have been historically oppressed and marginalized due to capitalism and colonization. They emphasize that it is important that the knowledges of these communities be validated, and that marginalized people have the voices and agency to use these knowledges. A prominent concept highlighted in this chapter is the idea that counter-narratives must be used in the history classroom. The goal of using counter-narratives in the history classroom is for students to partake in an interrogative process where commonly taught historical narratives rooted in Eurocentric paradigms are questioned, thus decolonizing the history curriculum. The authors insist that decolonizing the classroom is a daily practice and show sample curriculum materials that can help teachers accomplish this task. One example is an assignment where students are given a calendar showing a holiday with two names (Columbus Day and Indigenous Peoples' Day) with then a set of critical thinking questions about the narratives and historical figures celebrated on this day, including which narratives are dominant and which are counter. The authors also share the Culturally Responsive Teaching Protocol they developed to help teachers identify and address linguistic racism in various media. The authors conclude the chapter by reminding readers that anti-racist pedagogy involves the consistent use of counter-narrative approaches that validate the experiences of the oppressed and challenge the dominant, colonial narratives, giving students the ability to critically interrogate history.

Chapter 9, the concluding chapter, serves as a final commentary from Friedrich, the volume editor, about the concept of human dignity, a principle which has guided her scholarship in relation to anti-racism in linguistics. The author defines human dignity as the idea that all human beings are intrinsically worthy despite their socioeconomic status, and she argues that it is an improved alternative to human rights because dignity encompasses rights and much more. The author continues to explain what human dignity looks like in language use. Included here is the idea that humans have linguistic rights, or the right to learn and use any language they need or want and receive acknowledgement for their language use. Applying the dignity framework to language use would mean questioning the words we use and how they affect others. Using language that is racist violates human dignity. Human dignity can instead be upheld in the language classroom when teachers implement dignity-enhancing practices like offering them alternative vocabulary to use in sentences or role-playing scenarios of conflict and showing students how to respond without attacking others. Another example of this is helping students understand the difference between criticizing a person's action versus a person themselves. Lastly, the author states that multilingualism itself can promote anti-racism as it helps us to see alternative perspectives which leads to empathy and greater understanding between different groups of people.

### 3. Conclusion

Overall, this volume presents a fascinating collection of personal narratives from scholars and practitioners in the humanities (with applied linguists accounting for the majority) who are committed to anti-

racist work where it is needed in language teaching and research. At first glance, one might misjudge this volume as being interesting only to those who care about theoretical knowledge. However, this volume proves itself to be useful to practitioners who actively teach language (or even history) in any context (K-16, domestic and international), due to chapters such as 4, 7, 8 and 9, which give actual samples of curriculum and questions teachers can ask themselves and others. In the back of the book, one may also find a series of commonly asked questions about how to be an anti-racism linguist with answers from several authors in the volume. Practitioners and researchers in many contexts will find these questions and the answers to them to be insightful. Anyone who works or interacts in contexts where language is used and racism is existent is bound to find this volume to be inspiring and enlightening.

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**Emilia Gracia**, Arizona State University  
 Emilia.Gracia@asu.edu

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- EN** **Emilia Gracia** is a Ph.D. candidate in linguistics and applied linguistics at Arizona State University. She is also an instructional professional at ASU Global Launch, where she teaches English to international students, trains international teachers, and designs online language courses. Her research interests include second language pragmatics, computer-assisted language learning, critical pedagogy, and raciolinguistics.
- ES** **Emilia Gracia** es doctoranda en lingüística y lingüística aplicada en la Arizona State University (Estados Unidos) y experta en didáctica en ASU Global Launch, donde enseña inglés a estudiantes internacionales, capacita a profesores internacionales y diseña cursos de lengua en línea. Sus intereses de investigación abarcan la pragmática de segundas lenguas, el aprendizaje de lenguas asistido por computador, la pedagogía crítica y la raciolingüística.
- IT** **Emilia Gracia** è iscritta al dottorato in Linguistica e Linguistica Applicata presso l'Arizona State University (Stati Uniti) ed è esperta di didattica presso l'ASU Global Launch dove insegna inglese a studenti internazionali, forma insegnanti internazionali e progetta corsi di lingua online. I suoi interessi di ricerca includono la pragmatica delle lingue seconde, l'apprendimento linguistico attraverso le tecnologie informatiche, la pedagogia critica e la etnolinguistica.