

## ABSTRACT (ION)

In this PhD, like a 'mojada' ('wetback' – a migrant 'illegally' crossing borders), I set-off on risky crossings into alien and patrolled terrains in Spanish language(s) education and academia (Anzaldúa, 1984, p.31).<sup>1</sup> My 'negotiated' and disrupted entries at checkpoints along the journey of reflexivity on collaborations in a university, in schools, and Spanish classrooms created visceral and intellectual chaos, with costs. Unresolved epistemological and ontological tensions are demonstrated throughout my *mestiza (hybrid)* (Anzaldúa, 1987, p.101) 'testimonio' (*testimony*) (Reyes & Rodríguez, 2012, p.526) of the 'messy' knowledges, politics, and alliances (McGloin, 2016) that emerged with participants (Freire, 1996; Conquergood, 1998). This thesis performs (Denzin, 2003) 'intersecting' practices and relations (Collins, 2015, p.50) in participants' wor(l)ds (in the word world) (Freire & Macedo 1987, p.29) in which

---

<sup>1</sup> This sentence may unsettle readers. In 'western' logic, deductive thinking (known in the 'Pyramid Principle') shapes academic writing (Minto, 2009). The structure of a sentence in English may begin with a subject, followed by a verb and a predicate. This sentence is different. In fact, this thesis is different. It does not only subscribe to 'western' logic; other ways of making meaning are possible (Kumaravadivelu, 2015). An alternative form of reading is required to understand my political and scholarly moves. They are political in the sense that subjective, corporeal, and experiential ways of knowing, being and doing are privileged. They are scholarly because in the commitment to 'subaltern' knowledges, practices, politics, and voices other ways are created to broaden 'western' approaches to pedagogy and research, however diverse (Solomiansky, 2008, p.65). The reading of this complex thesis demands different 'habits of reception' (Marcus & Saka, 2006, p.102) and engagement in which 'exactness' is somewhat abandoned (Kristeva, 2002, pp.4-6) for a messy reflexivity on research and life (Marcus, 1994; Denzin, 2003; Haseman, 2006). The participant-writer resists, sometimes unsuccessfully, 'modernist' ideologies in research that enact 'prescriptive' (Freire, 1996, p.29), detached and experimental 'assembly-line' positionings (hooks, 1994, p.13). These undermine *mestiza* consciousness, body, and movement (Anzaldúa, 1984, p.99). The writer seeks a decolonising standpoint in which 'always emergent' (Marcus & Saka, 2006, p.102) sensibilities are deployed (Freire, 1996, p.33).

Also, my use of the term 'wetback' may unsettle. However, I admire people who take risks in serving 'social justice' (against racism, classism, and other forms of oppression, including their own). I don't 'ride on the back' of marginalised people, and as in Anzaldúa's work (1984), I draw on the 'wetback' metaphor respectfully to illuminate the struggles, voices, and practices of participants on the margin (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; hooks, 1984; Geertz, 1973). My writing deliberately uses adjectival formations and images in place of objects, and subjects to highlight the body, 'círculos' (*circles*) of (un)certainity, and movement (Freire, 2002, p.26). This way, writing can enable intimate connections with readers that more 'strongly' engage them (Marcus, 1994, p.573). It may not feel liberating for some. The writing is a performance (Denzin 2003; Mackinlay, 2016; Pennycook, 2005), for social critique and action, for some (Anzaldúa, 2015). It has a transformative function, like this footnote.

pedagogical and scientific baggage (ideologies and interests) are 'spoken back to' (Tuhivai Smith, 2012, p.40), abandoned and transformed in an act of 'calling back' (Anzaldúa, 2015, pp.1-2).<sup>2</sup>

It is ultimately my praxis, or 'mystory' (Ulmer, 2004), built on subjective, aesthetic, (Marcus, 1994, p.384) and 'imaginal' (Anzaldúa 2000, p.19) experiences, which served (and can still serve) collective interests (Rorty, 2010, p.27) within limits in this project (Arnott, 1998, p.73). Rather than narrowly pursuing disciplinary 'goals' (Kristeva, 2002, p.10), the textuality of writing and 'collaborative' practices in this study and thesis respectfully 'move' readers to (a) experience being a 'marginal' other (relinquish some power) in order to (b) experience and understand the "racial grammar" of this PhD (Donnor & Ladson-Billings, 2017, p.201). The study is written for and in parts by 'marginalised' participants (without an 'othering' agenda) (Jones & Calafell, 2012, p.958). It employs 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973, p.312) and 'messy text' (Marcus, 1994, p. 389) to provide intimate 'ethnographic' (Conquergood, 1986, p.179) excavations 'mediated' (Marcus, 2007, p.1143) in symbolic and material ways in:

1. An enactment of a critical pedagogical approach to Spanish
2. The struggles to engage in a Freirean inspired 'dialogue'
3. An alternative messy post-positivist form of research practice where pluralistic voices and products contribute to knowledge and practice
4. The creation of subaltern political knowledge; of hybrid discourses, experiences, and practices: firstly, a positivist, third-person, detached, left-column account; and secondly, a post-positivist, first-person, and creative mestiza right-column testimony.

Two 'stories' stand at the heart of this thesis: the struggle to engage in 'cognitive' theories of learning and motivation (Dweck, 1986) and the struggle to enact a 'Freirean' dialogue and messy subaltern 'praxis' with participants. Freire's (1996, p. 62) description of praxis, to which I still subscribe a decade after this PhD began, and even when my practice in this thesis and beyond it fails to realise its 'transformative' intent in the everyday, inspires my *lucha* (*fight*):

---

<sup>2</sup> In this thesis, the term 'participants' refers to people undertaking an active or less obvious role in this 'case study' and the thesis.

Education as the practice of freedom – as opposed to education as the practice of domination – denies that man [sic] is abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world; it also denies that the world exists as a reality apart from people. Authentic reflection considers ... people in their relations with the world.

Despite risks taken in this PhD, I believe *la esperanza es lo ultimo que se pierde* (*hope is the last thing that is lost*), and so have 'arrived' momentarily to a different entry point, to mestiza activist ways (Pérez, 2005, p.1). The thesis fights for 'academic freedom' to speak back to and up to racialized, institutional, and political practices that other this working-class-mestiza (Jones & Calafell, 2012; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). It seeks freedom to push the borders of positivist narratives and their 'relationships to power' for the participation of 'marginalised' others in the structures and practices of education that, unchallenged, may silence them too (Anzaldúa, 1987; hooks, 1984; Lorde, 1979; Tuhiwai Smith, 2013, p.20). The thesis is a call to action to give 'a fair go' (*a fair chance*) to Spanish students, and Spanish teachers, and their early career researcher allies.