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Growing Pains in Creating Dialogic Learning Opportunities

Jin Sook Lee, Valerie Meier, Samantha Harris, Mary Bucholtz, and Dolores Inés Casillas

Introduction

Too often opportunities to engage with academically rigorous and socially important topics of interest are limited for students learning English due to misinformed beliefs that English proficiency must precede content learning (Calderón et al., 2011; Callahan et al., 2010; Gamoran, 2017). Second language acquisition studies have shown that language proficiency is most effectively developed through social interactions in which learners have opportunities to use the target language for authentic purposes (Cook, 2002; Lantolf, 2006; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Walqui, 2000). Opportunities for language use that are embedded in meaningful, relevant, and academically rigorous content have the potential to promote interactions that are sustained, in depth, and student-controlled, which are especially beneficial for English learners' oral language development (Walqui & Heritage, 2018). Yet, many English language development (ELD) classes continue to place emphasis on decontextualized language skills training rather than utilize meaningful curricula that can lead to productive and transformative contexts for interaction (Callahan et al., 2010; Gamoran, 2017; Mallinson et al., 2011; Roessingh, 2004; Valdés, 2001).

This chapter examines how a university-school partnership program, School Kids Investigating Language in Life and Society (SKILLS), was implemented in an ELD class for multilingual learners who were in the earlier stages of English language development. From the perspectives of the instructors, it presents pedagogical examples of the challenges and complexities involved in creating dialogic and participatory learning opportunities (Resnick et al., 2015; see also Alvarez et al., this volume) via activities designed to foster students' abilities to identify and analyze sociolinguistic discrimination and injustice. In this chapter, we purposefully use the term *multilingual learners* to refer to students who have been institutionally designated as English learners to emphasize their holistic identities and expertise as multilingual and multicultural people. The leveraging of multilingual learners' full linguistic and cultural repertoires (e.g., their knowledge

of different varieties and forms of their primary language(s), English, and any other languages they have access to; gestures; and their cultural experiences and knowledge) were critical in supporting their ability to engage in classroom interactions that led to increased awareness, understanding, and exchanges about sociolinguistic justice issues relevant to their lives (see also Charity Hudley et al., 2020, for other examples). As we expand and refine the SKILLS program to meet the needs of different students, we share our growing pains through our reflections on missed opportunities and our visions of teaching practices that can promote more dialogic, critical, and inclusive classroom interactions.

What Is SKILLS?

SKILLS is a 20-week academic outreach program which provides students from minoritized linguistic backgrounds access to an introductory sociolinguistics curriculum that highlights the sociopolitical dimensions of language practices (for more information, see Bucholtz et al., 2018). It combines research, academic preparation and training, and activism by bringing together teams of university faculty, graduate students, undergraduates, K-12 students, and their teachers to work against social, linguistic, and educational inequities. SKILLS is based in the concept of sociolinguistic justice, defined as "self-determination for linguistically subordinated individuals and groups in sociopolitical struggles over language" (Bucholtz et al., 2014, p. 145) and is driven by three objectives: (a) to position youth as expert producers of knowledge rather than just consumers of knowledge; (b) to guide youth in examining and exposing sociolinguistic injustices in their own lives and communities; and (c) to increase access to higher education by leveraging youth expertise to further develop their academic skills and aspirations.

In the version of the program that we discuss in this chapter, SKILLS is a push-in program that is embedded in existing school schedules. It introduces high school students to the fundamentals of the discipline of linguistics and connects their new knowledge to the exploration of topics related to language and identity (e.g., family language policy, language brokering, and gender and language), language and community (e.g., linguistic profiling, linguistic variation, and language status), and language and media (e.g., linguistic bias, language change, and language use in politics). It also provides instruction on basic research methods for data collection and analysis, including interviewing, taking field notes, transcribing, using the International Phonetic Alphabet, and other methods relevant to students' research projects. Depending on the disciplinary expertise of the SKILLS instructors in class, specific lesson topics and planned activities can vary across classrooms. Therefore, repeated participation in the SKILLS program does not imply duplicate content; rather, we have found that students who have participated in SKILLS for multiple years have been able to engage more

deeply with topics and produce more sophisticated research projects (see www.skills.ucsb.edu for more information).

The SKILLS instructional team is composed of one to two SKILLS instructors and three to four undergraduate mentors in each class. SKILLS instructors, who are doctoral students from the fields of linguistics, Chicanx studies, education, sociology, comparative literature, and Spanish and Portuguese, are recruited before the start of the program. They enroll in a seminar course before and during the SKILLS program for preparatory training and pedagogical support. Undergraduate student mentors, who have experience working with youth and are preferably bilingual, are recruited from diverse undergraduate majors and matched to the needs of different SKILLS sites. They work closely with the lead SKILLS instructors, serving as teaching assistants and mentors to the high school students. At the end of the program, the SKILLS student-researchers are invited to the university for SKILLS Day, where they present their capstone projects to the academic community in a day-long research symposium. Through SKILLS Day, students are able to share their knowledge as youth researchers and contribute to raising community awareness about sociolinguistic justice.

Our Instructional Approach

In our work with youth, we have learned that educational practice is most effective when all participants work in accompaniment as co-learners who contribute different forms of expertise to the overall learning goal. Our conceptualization of accompaniment as a continuously negotiated social process of interaction and collaboration underscores the ongoing nature of sociolinguistic justice efforts (Bucholtz et al., 2016). As such, accompaniment requires all participants to sustain an open, critical, and reflexive mindset.

Furthermore, our instructional practices are based on the understanding that dialogic interactions are critical to students' learning and development (Alexander, 2017; Gillies, 2016; Mercer & Littleton, 2007; Michaels et al., 2008; Resnick et al., 2015). We nurture student motivation to engage in meaningful and dialogic interactions through our collective investment in achieving sociolinguistic justice. In promoting dialogic interactions, we are guided by the belief that "knowledge and understanding come from testing evidence, analyzing ideas and exploring values" (Alexander, 2017, p. 32) and from centering student perspectives by being "attentive to what students say" (Alexander, 2017, p. 35). Alexander (2017) has proposed five qualities of dialogic teaching that can be used to guide interactions in class:

- *Collective*, in that teachers and students work together to address learning tasks;
- *Reciprocal*, so that teachers and students attend to one another, share ideas, and consider alternative perspectives;
- *Supportive*, so that students assist one another's learning;

- *Cumulative*, in that teachers and students build on one another's ideas to construct coherent investigations; and
- *Purposeful*, with teachers ensuring that discussions are designed to achieve specific educational goals.

By engaging multilingual learners in interactions guided by dialogic teaching, we expect English language development to occur organically through contextualized practice with language (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Drawing on sociocultural perspectives on second language acquisition, we understand language learning and development to stem from meaningful collaborations and interactions, as learners mediate communication through use of their language and semiotic resources (Block, 2003; Lantolf, 2006). Moreover, to promote academic communication, Haneda (2014) has argued for the need to honor multilingual learners' lived experiences and to support them to strategically use multiple tools, including vernacular and academic registers as well as other modes of meaning-making, in joint activities with meaningful goals. She has asserted that this approach is especially important for multilingual learners, given that their experiences and language(s) are not always valued within mainstream schooling. Thus, in our instructional planning, our focus was less on the development of English per se, and more on creating opportunities for multilingual learners to use their linguistic and cultural repertoires to engage in dialogic interactions, and thereby to interrogate issues of sociolinguistic justice.

To support multilingual learners, we also anticipated the need for scaffolds to move students toward a stronger understanding of classroom topics and to facilitate their expression of ideas in English. To do so, we drew on Hammond and Gibbons's (2005) descriptions of planned and interactional scaffolding. They have defined planned scaffolds as forms of support that teachers design into their lessons, including defining learning goals based on students' prior content and English language knowledge; selecting and sequencing tasks and texts appropriate for these goals; choosing specific participant structures; and planning for message abundancy by preparing multiple, complementary ways for students to access the information (e.g., through spoken and written language, gestures, and images). They have described interactional scaffolds as teachers' discourse moves (e.g., connecting to students' prior experiences; summarizing key ideas to highlight what has been learned; amplifying student ideas and reframing them using academic language) to facilitate communication that cannot be planned but are contingent on unfolding interaction. Based on the perceived needs of the multilingual learners, both forms of planned and interactional scaffolding were utilized in our lesson design and practice.

Lastly, teacher reflexivity, the process of continual reflection upon our teaching practices to raise critical awareness of our interactional style and language use (Matthews & Jessel, 1998), was necessary to help us understand how opportunities for dialogic interactions can be created. Thus, to

engage in reflexive practice, the SKILLS instructors kept a reflective journal of classroom events and their own teaching practices and also participated in a weekly discussion with the entire SKILLS team to jointly discuss lesson plans, share reflections on their teaching performance, and problem-solve pedagogical challenges.

Research Site and Participants

SKILLS started in 2010, but until 2018, the program had mainly served English-proficient multilingual students in Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) (i.e., college-readiness classes for students from groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education), who received dual-enrollment college credit for their participation. In 2018, several of our partner schools invited us to bring SKILLS into their ELD classes. Since then, we have been working to adapt the SKILLS curriculum to meet the needs of multilingual learners, the vast majority of whom are recent immigrants from Latin America, who are in the process of developing their English language proficiency. Because SKILLS views all forms of students' linguistic and cultural repertoires as learning resources, we did not assume that students needed a particular level of English proficiency to participate. Instead, we did our best to recruit instructional team members who shared students' language backgrounds to bridge communication gaps and ensure students could actively interpret course content, participate in class activities, and communicate their ideas to others who did not share their home/primary language(s). Consequently, instructors were intentional about making spaces for different languages to be used in class, supporting translanguaging practices that encouraged students to fluidly draw on their linguistic repertoires to maximize their communicative potential (García, 2009), and limiting direct translation in lectures and whole-class discussions. Whenever possible, instructors also used tandem talk in English and a partner language (primarily Spanish), with two speakers building on each other's talk in different languages to provide further explanation and clarification (Lee et al., 2008).

The data for this chapter were collected in the pilot year of this version of SKILLS in one of the ELD classrooms at a high school on California's Central Coast. The SKILLS class met once a week for 90 minutes from January to May. The class included two SKILLS graduate co-instructors, four bilingual undergraduate students serving as teaching assistants, the classroom ELD teacher, and eighteen 9th- through 12th-grade multilingual learners who were in an ELD Level II class designated for students with English Language Proficiency Assessment for California equivalent scores in the range of *somewhat developed English skills* (2) to *moderately developed English skills* (3). Two students had moved between the U.S. and Mexico at several points in their lives, but the majority had immigrated to the U.S. within the preceding two to four years. Sixteen of the students spoke Spanish as one of their

primary language(s), with at least three of these students also proficient in an Indigenous language of Mexico; one student spoke Tagalog as well as other regional Filipino languages; and one spoke Mandarin. In addition to their ELD class, the students were in physical education, Spanish as a world language, and non-honors-track content classes throughout the day. ELD students are not permitted to take honors courses, which made the intellectually stimulating content of the SKILLS curriculum especially important in this classroom.

The instruction in this particular SKILLS class was led by Valerie and Sam, who are co-authors of this chapter. They have many years of experience working with multilingual learners in post-secondary contexts. They both have master's degrees in TESOL-related fields and are currently enrolled in a doctoral program in education. Valerie, a white woman in her 40s who has lived in many different countries for extensive periods of time, was a part of the SKILLS instructional team the previous year when it was implemented in AVID classes. Sam is a multiracial woman in her 20s from the East Coast whose ethnicity is not easily identifiable through her physical attributes. This was her first experience with the SKILLS program. They are both English-dominant and were perceived to be English monolingual speakers by the students, although Valerie has some proficiency in Spanish and Sam speaks Korean as a home/community language. They recruited undergraduates who could provide instructional support in students' primary languages; their team included undergraduate mentors who were fluent in Mandarin and Spanish, but they were unable to recruit a Tagalog speaker. The ELD classroom teacher, a Latina veteran bilingual teacher, was always present in the class during SKILLS instruction. Although she was supportive of the program, she did not directly participate in any of the lessons or the planning and debriefing sessions; she mainly assisted with classroom management.

On non-SKILLS days, the ELD curriculum was somewhat eclectic, utilizing both an individualized, computer-based remedial reading program that was not necessarily developed for multilingual learners and an ELD textbook focused on vocabulary as well as reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. Students spent approximately half of their class time on the computer, independently reading short passages tailored to their Lexile measures that matched their reading ability to leveled texts and responding to multiple-choice questions, and the other half of their time completing tasks related to the ELD textbook. For example, one ELD textbook lesson began with individual seatwork during which students were provided with sentence starters and asked to generate sentences for five previously learned vocabulary words. Next, the teacher read an excerpt from a contemporary work of fiction aloud; students were expected to track the text silently and, when the teacher paused, to read the subsequent word aloud in unison. As she read, the teacher would stop periodically to paraphrase the text or to ask students comprehension questions. Students' responses to these questions

were brief, and the discussion was largely teacher-driven. Students were frequently engaged in side conversations, typically unrelated to the lesson, but they rarely participated in whole-class interactions. In addition, while the teacher, who spoke Spanish and English fluently, allowed students to ask questions in Spanish, she responded primarily in English. This situation is typical of many ELD classrooms in the district, and it is important to emphasize that we do not intend any criticism of the teacher, who was committed to her students and highly competent in following the curriculum expected of her. However, this structure does not permit a significant degree of dialogic interaction of the kind needed to gain language proficiency or engage in meaningful learning—that is, the kind of interaction that is central to the SKILLS program.

Data Sources and Analysis

The data presented in this chapter come from a larger data set of 30 hours of video-recorded classroom interactions, artifacts of student work, and reflection notes written by the two SKILLS lead instructors after every class. The classroom interactions were recorded using both a traditional video camera to capture whole-class discussions and two 360-degree video cameras placed at individual tables during small-group interactions. The research team used instructors' reflection notes to identify lessons in which students seemed highly engaged, as evidenced by the amount of student talk about and perceived interest in the topic. We then transcribed these lessons, selected specific excerpts to analyze, reviewed the excerpts in context of the larger goals of the lesson, coded for different forms of scaffolding, and conducted an analysis of the successes and missed opportunities in promoting dialogic interactions as well as in the design of the lessons. Our analysis of the instructors' reflections on their teaching performance as well as their interactional decisions offers insights into teachers' motivations behind their actions and decision-making processes (Leitch & Day, 2000; Loughran, 1996; Schön, 1983). We present the instructors' reflections in their own voices to capture their individual experiences and growth as instructors in this new context.

Findings

Within the first week or so of the program, the SKILLS team quickly discovered that the new instructional context of the ELD classroom came with its own unique challenges. It was challenging: (a) to create a new classroom culture in which all languages and experiences were acknowledged as important and valid resources for learning; (b) to build trust so that students would feel comfortable speaking about personal or sensitive topics, including discrimination, injustice, and exclusion; and (c) to engage students in extended, critical conversations about these topics. It was not until halfway

through the program that we began to see changes in these areas. At the onset, we anticipated the need to provide additional language support to make the content accessible to multilingual learners, but we did not foresee that the content of the existing SKILLS curriculum would need to be altered. We soon realized that topics such as language brokering, heritage language maintenance, and codeswitching—all of which assumed experiences typical of English-proficient multilingual and heritage speakers—were not as relevant or relatable to this new demographic of students as they were to the AVID students. This realization was evident in our first few class sessions, when we had trouble getting the students to talk at all, much less to engage in any critical dialogue. It was only when we turned the focus of the content to reflect their unique experiences as multilingual learners that the students seemed engaged and willing to talk.

In the following section, we present two particular lessons: one on language policing led by Sam, and the other on linguistic and cultural variation in memes led by Valerie. These two lessons stood out because they elicited greater participation and greater willingness from students to share their personal experiences with language policing on the one hand and their expertise interpreting memes on the other. It is unclear whether it was the topics alone or the timing of the lessons—in that they both took place later in the program when the students were much more comfortable and familiar with the SKILLS—that heightened their interest in these lessons. In any case, we discovered that these lessons presented particularly rich opportunities to promote and support dialogic interactions in a productive and transformative context. We first describe our collective planning of the lessons and our pedagogical intentions for them, and then we present a personal recounting of each lesson from the perspective of each lesson's lead instructor. The names of students are pseudonyms.

Centering Youth Experience in a Lesson on Language Policing

The SKILLS unit examining language policing as a raciolinguistic issue was developed by a previous instructor in order to make the critique of racism a more central component of the program (Zarate, 2018). However, this was the first time that this content was designed to engage students classified as English Learners—a demographic that has been subjected to its own unique set of racializing linguistic ideologies. As educators of students from minoritized linguistic backgrounds at a time when racist and anti-immigrant sentiments and hate crimes are increasing (Darling-Hammond, 2017), we (Sam and Valerie) recognized the importance of providing a designated time and relatively safe space for students to talk about these issues. In particular, for this group of students, institutional attempts to "fix" their "lack" of English proficiency can often be the result of camouflaged racist ideologies that can cause them to internalize racist and deficit perspectives (Flores & Rosa, 2015).

We considered our lesson on language policing successful in part because students were eager to share their emotional reactions to ideological "rules" about who can speak what language, when, and where, as well as how such expectations come to be established. On several occasions students stated that they spoke "bad" English or that they should not be allowed to speak their home language in public or at school. Many students also commented that they felt ashamed to speak their home/community language. For us as instructors, it was necessary to support students' socio-emotional well-being by exposing these negative and discriminatory linguistic ideologies and practices as well as to foster students' advocacy for sociolinguistic justice. With these ideas in mind, we set the following learning objectives for the Language Policing lesson.[1] Teachers, mentors, and students will collectively: (a) develop an understanding of how the societal status of the language and its speakers shapes how languages are valued or devalued, which often dictate language policing practices; (b) explore the possible motivations behind language policing; and (c) brainstorm tools to confront negative attitudes and misconceptions about languages that many of our multilingual learners face as speakers of languages other than English.

In order to provide a concrete example of the key concepts we were discussing (e.g., racism, xenophobia, bias, stereotype), we shared a video news story of an incident in a New Jersey classroom in which a teacher told a Spanish-speaking student that "brave men and women [are] not fighting for your right to speak Spanish" and ordered the student to "speak American." The video, a CBS New York news broadcast disseminated on YouTube with the title "Calls for Disciplinary Action for NJ Teacher Caught Telling Students to 'Speak American,'" included footage of a student walkout protesting these remarks as well as interviews with students and parents (Rozner, 2017).

To help mediate conversations about the video, as a part of our planned scaffolding, we provided students with a series of "learning talk" questions (Gillies, 2016) in a handout created for this specific lesson. The questions included, "Why do people get upset when they hear people speaking other languages? Is it unreasonable to try and stop people from speaking other languages (language policing)? Why/Why not? What about in spaces where you're trying to learn a language? Should you only use that language?" We allowed some planning time and encouraged students to write down their ideas first as well as to speak in any language they felt comfortable in. As we reflect on these questions now, we realize that students may have been better able to participate if we had started with something closer to their own experiences rather than the challenging task of thinking in the abstract. For example, we could have asked them to think of a time when someone tried to monitor their linguistic practices or to discuss the rules about language in their ELD class. In the whole-class discussion, students shared some initial, emotional responses to the teacher's treatment of the Spanish-speaking student. They pointed out the

preposterousness of the teacher using the term *American* to refer to the English language, insisted that the students were right in their protest, and commented that they would do the same.

To extend the momentum of students' talk about their personal experiences with language policing, we followed up with small-group discussions of a second video created by the YouTube channel Mic, titled "Why Are Latinos Policed for speaking Spanish?" This video discusses rising instances of hate crimes, Hispanophobia, and the policing of minoritized language practices in the U.S. with supporting media examples. It also explains why this trend is taking place and briefly discusses what can be done about it (www.youtube.com/watch?v=_M6xwkGmwPU).

We expected that students would be able to identify language policing as a form of bigotry and xenophobia and hoped that we as instructors would be able to guide students in a dialogic discussion. While we had been introduced to Hammond and Gibbons's (2005) interactional scaffolding strategies during our SKILLS training sessions, implementing these strategies was more challenging than expected. In our weekly debriefing sessions with SKILLS teaching teams in other classrooms, we found that most team members struggled to help students move from responding emotionally to language policing behaviors to critically examining the ideologies that motivated such behaviors.

Example 1

Sam:	So what did you think? What do you guys think of the video?
Luis:	There is some people they don't know the the story of the United States because the English is not from here, and . . .
Sam:	That's fair. English is not from here.
Luis:	They is close mind.
Sam:	Yeah, maybe they're a little close-minded.
Danny:	That's not their business.
Sam:	That's fair too, right? It's really not their business.
Danny:	That's the way they speak so this is a free America.
Sam:	Yeah, I agree. So, but let me just ask you this. If you can imagine, why are those people getting upset? Sofía, what do you think?
	((Sofía is looking at paper))
Danny:	I think about these, about that stuff. I feel bad though.
Sam:	You feel bad?
Danny:	I feel mad like . . .
Sam:	Yeah, I mean it doesn't make you feel good.
Danny:	They try to treat people bad because they speak different.
Sam:	They speak differently. Okay sure.

To illustrate this point, we present an example from a group discussion. On the day of this discussion, Sam, who speaks and understands very little Spanish, joined Luis, Sofía, and Danny's group. Luis and Sofía were both dominant speakers of Spanish but participated in the discussion in English. Luis spoke a variety of Spanish from Mexico City, while Sofía's reflected the speech in Sinaloa. Danny was from the Philippines and was most comfortable speaking Tagalog but also had competence in three other regional languages. He was also learning a little Spanish from his classmates and was conversationally competent in English. The reflective analysis in Example 1 is presented from Sam's first-person perspective.

Having just finished the second video, I opened the floor to the students by simply asking what they thought. This brief example demonstrates the knowledge that students brought to this discussion. Danny immediately revealed an implicit awareness that language policing is not an apolitical practice by connecting it to the ideological narrative of a "free America." Luis further exposed the hypocrisy of this act and its nativist roots by referencing the history of the English—"[it's] not from here [the US]"—an idea that arose again later. It was not clear to me (and perhaps to other group members) in the moment that by making external connections and offering their personal opinions, Danny and Luis were disrupting the antiquated idea that multilingual learners are unable to engage in discussions of political and social issues. This would have been clearer

Example 2

Luis:	And then import about history. First there is the (Native American tribal name) here and then the people from Spain came here and then I don't know. ((Shakes head, laughs.))
Sam:	Before the people came from Spain. You mean (Central Coast City)? Or everywhere?
Luis:	Yeah (Central Coast City).
Sam:	Oh, so yeah. There were the Indigenous languages and then they were speaking Spanish first before English!
Sam:	So, what do you think they're worried about?
Luis:	They just like . . . raci—rashist?
Sam:	Racist?
Luis:	Yes, racist.
Luis:	Like afraid of speaking another languages. Like . . . it's not so bad. ((Shaking head.))
Sofía:	((Nods head and laughs.))
Sam:	Yeah, it's not bad. What do you think? ((Looks toward Sofía.)) You can tell me.
Sofía:	They are, they are . . . ((looks to Luis)) ¿Cómo se dice ignorantes? (*How do you say 'ignorant'?*)
Sam:	Yeah, they're ignorant. So, they need to—that is part of it, right? ((Luis and Sofía both nodding.)) They're ignorant means that they need to learn more. More education about history. More education about language.

had I been more effective in my efforts to attend to students' responses and to push them to consider alternative perspectives, in order to support a reciprocal dialogue (Alexander, 2017). For instance, when Danny made the statement "this is a free America," I could have built upon his response to help students to interrogate the meaning of freedom, including freedom of speech and language choice, and to establish the right of youth to engage in civic activism, as modeled in the first video. I could have also agreed with Luis's statement that "English is not from here" and asked him to explain this idea further to his classmates. However, in this case, Luis took this initiative himself in Example 2 by sharing his knowledge without relying on me to establish the reciprocity of the interaction.

Luis made an important connection to the local context and its history of linguistic colonization. But again, it was not clear that the other students picked up on this valuable contribution. This was an ideal opportunity for me to realize Alexander's qualities of dialogic teaching. However, because I was so focused on giving Luis the space to talk, I did not move beyond my affirmative responses to probe his ideas more deeply or to help him further share his ideas with the rest of the group. Despite my positive intentions, I missed other opportunities to engage students in more rigorous, critical discussion. For instance, I tried to involve Sofía by asking her a new question ("Why are those people getting upset? Sofía, what do you think?"), but I should have recognized the complexity of posing a new question and given her an opportunity to convey her initial emotional response, too. I realize now that the question itself, which I pose again in Example 2, was not ideal because it was asking for a lot—an explanation for racist behavior—which would have been difficult for anybody to respond to on the spot. In attempting not to replicate the traditional classroom Initiate-Response-Evaluate (IRE) response pattern in which there is an expected answer, I went too far in the opposite direction, where there is no clear answer. I also did not consider what an answer to this question might look like. My failure to expand on students' comments may have implied that their responses were not "right" and that I was seeking some expected answer, therefore undermining precisely what I was trying to achieve.

After reviewing the transcripts with the research team, I recognize that I restated students' responses in part to acknowledge that I heard what they said. But I also did so in part to confirm that I understood them correctly and to encourage them implicitly to say more. My efforts to utilize interactional scaffolds to be encouraging were evident, but other discursive moves to expand students' talk fell short. With regard to planned scaffolding, the handout could have been better utilized if the students were provided with more language structures to aid their expressions in English. Despite the fact that the SKILLS program encourages the use of any language in class, our students often expressed their ideas using the English structures they already had, whether out of consideration for me as a non-Spanish speaker or because of their socialization as multilingual learners. I now see the need

Example 3

Sam:	Why is it unreasonable—so why is it just a bad idea to try to stop people from speaking their language?
Luis:	¿Por qué esté . . . es muy ((inaudible)) a las personas que hablan otros idiomas? ((Looking at Sofía)) *(Why is it . . . it's very ((inaudible)) to people who speak other languages?)*
Sofía:	¿Por qué es reasonable? *(Why is it reasonable?)*
Luis:	Yeah. ¿Por qué no los van a querer? *(Why won't they want them?)*
Sofía:	Porque no los dejan expresarse . . . *(Because they don't let them express themselves . . .)*
Luis:	Because it's a huge world ((makes circular motions with hands)) and they speak another language. Like is a YouTuber he speaks English and he says I'm tired to wait to people learn English to speak to me so I will speak Spanish to speak to them.
Sam:	Ah! So, you want to talk to more people? Yeah, that's fair.

to focus on making meaning before employing strategies to produce the message in English. Additionally, while the objective of the brainstorming task was clear to us as instructors, this goal should have been made more explicit to the students to make the talk more purposeful.

These excerpts also highlight the original insights and expertise that the students brought to the discussion as well as the collective and supportive quality of their dialogue (Alexander, 2017)—a vast improvement on the silence we had observed in their regular ELD classes. For example, towards the end of Example 2, Sofía relied on Luis to confirm her word choice, and in Example 3, without prompting, Luis further supported her by translating my question.

My inability to speak or understand the students' home language limited my ability to build on their critical engagement with the topic. However, this segment shows how students utilized interactional scaffolds to support each other's meaning-making process and to make the interaction accessible to all participants, including me. Thus, when the environment was socially and linguistically inclusive, students played a central role in creating opportunities for dialogic interaction. For example, I saw evidence of strategic codeswitching and gesturing to make collective meaning. Luis in particular did extensive interactional work to make connections, create examples, and build on others' ideas while encouraging other students' participation. Examples like these highlight students' expertise in utilizing their linguistic and cultural knowledge to engage in cognitively challenging authentic language learning contexts and to create participatory learning opportunities for others.

Upon reflection, as the facilitator of this discussion, I should have fostered greater reciprocity by responding to students' comments beyond

simple acknowledgments like "that's fair" or "sure" and by making group discussions more purposeful by building more systematically on students' ideas. I should have also challenged students to say more and explain their opinions to move the discussion beyond listening for understanding and toward helping students make connections. Because many of the students had first-hand experiences with language policing, they were able to successfully express their affective responses to the topic, but the conversation stopped there. Although affect is an important component of critique and action (see Ferrada et al., 2019), a different approach to the lesson may have led to a more productive interaction that prompted deeper critical perspectives beyond their affective response. Rather than asking students to critique linguistic discrimination by showing them examples of injustice, we could have started with models of sociolinguistic activism that showcase the work of those fighting injustice. For instance, the discussion could have been oriented around the student walkout in the first video instead of on the actions of the teacher, or students could have listened to speeches by multilingual civil rights activists or watched videos of contemporary solidarity movements through which they could make connections to their own lives and imagine how they could be a part of civic activism. The work of real-world multilingual agents of sociolinguistic justice can be a model and the stepping stone for students to engage in dialogic, critical interactions. With respect to Alexander's (2017) dialogic qualities, these interactions can be purposeful in the sense that we are working towards justice in our own lives; reciprocal and cumulative in that we take interest and build on one another's ideas; and collective and supportive in that teachers along with students provide linguistic and cultural support for one another to learn and accomplish our goals together.

Centering Youth Expertise in a Lesson on Language and Memes

In the language policing lesson, we focused on youth experiences of and emotional engagement with linguistic racism. In the second lesson that we discuss here, we highlighted youth linguistic and cultural expertise. We used memes, humorous images/graphics that are endlessly modified with new captions and shared widely by young people across social media, as a way to engage students and integrate multimodal artifacts to scaffold multilingual learners' access to content. The lesson focused on the representation of specific languages and language varieties in memes. Central to this lesson was the positioning of students as experts whose linguistic and cultural knowledge and experiences were critical for the successful interpretation and evaluation of the memes. As a continuation of our broader curricular objective to examine and understand linguistic ideologies, the objectives of this lesson were: (a) to collectively uncover and examine linguistic and racial ideologies associated with specific language varieties; (b) to identify and explain various types of meme humor; and (c) to practice critically

analyzing such texts. In practice, we were much more successful in realizing the first two goals than the third.

The lesson spanned two days. On the first day, students were asked to individually search online for memes related to specific languages or language varieties. Although not prompted to do so, students also found and shared memes that drew on national or regional stereotypes. On the second day, students were given time to individually review all the memes, which the SKILLS team had organized thematically, and to choose two to write about using the handout described in this section. Following this, students worked in small groups to discuss their chosen memes.

As in the language policing lesson, we attempted to support our students by incorporating both planned and interactional scaffolding (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005). In addition to the deliberate sequencing of activities, we included three forms of planned scaffolding that we believed would support critical, dialogic interactions. First, we strategically grouped students from different language and cultural backgrounds so that students who had the requisite cultural knowledge to interpret a meme were positioned as local experts. Second, we encouraged students and SKILLS team members to draw on all of their semiotic resources—including oral and written language(s), gestures, and images—to communicate their understandings. Finally, as in the language policing lesson, we provided students with a series of "learning talk" questions (Gillies, 2016) in a handout that challenged them to explain ("Why is this meme funny? How would you explain it to someone who does not speak your language or is not from your culture?"); explore ("What is the meme 'saying'? What is the message?"); and evaluate ("Is this meme offensive? Why or why not?"). These questions were presented in both English and Spanish to explicitly provide students with the option to respond in either language.

We expected that students would start to deconstruct meme humor using the handout and that the SKILLS team member facilitating each small group would respond to students' ideas in ways that would deepen their thinking. Although interactional scaffolding is necessarily contingent and unplanned, we expected that facilitators' comments and questions would accomplish some of the functions described by Hammond and Gibbons (2005), such as linking specific interpretations or views to broader conceptual ideas; periodically recapping major ideas to highlight group thinking; reformulating student ideas; and potentially recasting these ideas into language that makes the ideas easier for every member of the group to understand.

However, in the small-group discussions, our team members struggled to help students move from explaining to critically evaluating the memes. To illustrate these challenges as well as the modest successes we experienced with this lesson, we focus on two examples from one group discussion. This group consisted of Valerie, who facilitated the discussion; one student who spoke Mandarin as his home language, Jun; and three students who spoke Spanish, Luis and Brenda from Mexico City, and Sofía from

Sinaloa. The following reflective analysis is presented from Valerie's first-person perspective.

The first episode took place at the very beginning of the small-group discussion. Immediately prior to this episode, Luis, Brenda, and Sofía had been looking at the memes about speakers from different regions of Mexico and laughing about a meme that featured an image from the movie *White Chicks*. In the original image, a blonde woman prepares for a confrontation by handing her designer dog carrier over to her friend and saying, "Hold my poodle." In the meme students were examining, mustaches and cowboy hats had been added to the two women, and the periodic table cell for the element Fe (iron) floats over the dog carrier. Above the image is the text "Cuando alguien habla mal de Sinaloa" (*When someone speaks badly about Sinaloa*), while the woman says, "Sostén my fierro, pariente" (*Hold my metal* [*i.e., gun*]*, friend*). Because Sofía is from Sinaloa, I asked her if she thought the meme was offensive. Sofía replied that it was not and attempted to explain that the meme featured a *buchona*, a stereotype of a voluptuous woman with a flamboyant personal style who is romantically involved with a drug dealer. Before outsiders such as Jun and I could understand how the meme perpetuated language stereotypes or other ideologies, first we had to understand the central cultural reference, and so Sofía undertook a comprehensive explanation.

The transcript in Example 4 captures a small stretch of the ensuing conversation and is representative of the supportive nature of the talk in the larger discussion and of Sofía's determination to explain her ideas in English. Throughout this interaction, Luis and Brenda attended carefully to Sofía's ideas, providing her with nonverbal encouragement and responding to her requests for linguistic support. As she began to talk, Luis encouraged her by flashing a thumbs-up, motioning her to say more, and then flashing another thumbs-up. When Sofía sought the English equivalent for *narcos*, Luis indicated that there is no direct translation, and when she asked for a translation of "to get married," Brenda provided it. Both here and later in the conversation, Sofía consistently asked how to say key words in English, and, as with the word "married," she frequently repeated the English word to confirm she was pronouncing it correctly. Although Sofía could have explained this to me in Spanish, it seems that she used this task as an opportunity to practice speaking in English.

At this point, I signaled that I have grasped the concept, and this would have been a natural place to redirect students away from description to a deeper discussion of how the *buchona* stereotype was deployed in this particular meme and how it related to broader regional stereotypes. Instead, I paused to think of an English-language equivalent, and Sofía, Luis, and Brenda took the opportunity to augment their description, adding in more details about gold jewelry, breast implants, and an exaggerated personal style. This was not necessarily a negative outcome, as these three students were clearly invested in communicating their insider cultural knowledge. However, it came at a

Example 4

Sofía:	The—
	Como the women and the mens,
	Como they are—
Brenda:	Narcos.
Sofía:	¿Cómo es la palabra de narcos en inglés? (*What is the word for narcos in English?*)
Luis:	((Inaudible)) ((Shaking head no))
Sofía:	They are narcos,
	And the womens,
	¿Cómo se dice que se casan? (*How do you say that they get married?*) ((Looking at Brenda and Luis))
Brenda:	Married.
Valerie:	They get married.
Sofía:	Marred. ((Pronounced as [marrɛd]))
	Married with the narcos,
	they are buchonas.
	The women.
Valerie:	Oooh. Do they get married for money?
Sofía:	Yeah. For money and the . . . ((Touches her nails))
	¿Cómo se dice uñas? (*How do you say nails?*)
Valerie:	For nails? ((Touches her nails and sounds incredulous))
Sofía:	Yeah. No.
	Ah, they use long . . . ((Touches nails again and looks at Brenda and Luis))
Brenda:	((Inaudible))
Sofía:	Long, like long nails.
	Yeah, long.
	And long . . . ((Gestures to mime long hair))
	and their clothes is,
	como exagerado (*like exaggerated*)
Valerie:	Oh, like their style.
	They have really long nails. ((Gestures to mime long nails.))
	Really long hair. ((Gestures to mime long hair.))
Sofía:	They are buchonas.
	And the men is narcos.
	Buchones.
Valerie:	Okay. I got it.

cost, as it was difficult for me to balance the need to give students ample time to share their cultural knowledge with the need to include all group members and to realize the larger goal of the lesson, which was to have students critically evaluate memes. My inability to successfully negotiate these three priorities is clearly illustrated in what happened next.

Because the three Spanish-speaking students' explanations had been directed at me, when they were finished, I checked with Jun to see if he understood. When he indicated that he did not, I paraphrased Sofía's description. At this point, I was worried that Jun had been excluded from the discussion for too long and so I opted for efficiency, but in doing so I appropriated Sofía, Brenda, and Luis's cultural knowledge and deprived them of the opportunity to share their expertise and engage in a more reciprocal exchange. Next, I asked Jun if he was aware of a similar phenomenon in China because I wanted him to be able to contribute distinct but related cultural knowledge. This too was another missed opportunity for a more reciprocal exchange. Instead of asking the question myself, I could have prompted Sofía, Brenda, and Luis to engage Jun directly. When Jun indicated he did not know of a comparable stereotype, I shifted my focus to the third priority—critically evaluating the meme—and asked Sofía whether she thought the meme was offensive. She explained that because she was not a *buchona*, she did not feel personally offended. I was stumped by this response, unsure how to unpack Sofía's criteria for offensiveness and whether to express my questions in direct, clear English or my limited Spanish; I also wanted to give Jun a chance to explain his own meme. As a result, I failed to expand on Sofía's response and problematize her narrow definition of what can be considered offensive, and this contributed to the fragmented, rather than cumulative, nature of this interaction. Instead of building toward a more coherent understanding of either regional stereotypes or the concept of offensiveness more generally, we moved rapidly from topic to topic.

The next episode took place approximately six minutes after the first and involved only Jun, Brenda, and Luis, as Sofía had gone to the restroom. At this point, I wanted students to think about the connections between the memes and their relationship to broader ideologies concerning language varieties, and so I asked them to consider the memes that employed mock Nahuatl by adding "tl" to the end of Spanish words (see Pharao Hansen, 2016). I explicitly attempted to make a connection between these memes and the meme that Jun had just described, which parodied the r-coloring (or "er" sound) in the Beijing accent (see also Zhang, 2005). While students did not comment on the possible connections, they did begin to closely examine the memes, and Brenda, laughing conspicuously and speaking to Luis in Spanish, pointed to a meme that featured two Indigenous women in traditional dress wearing Beats brand headphones, presumably listening to translations in a courtroom or conference setting rather than music. This meme was captioned "Ta' buena esta cumbiatl" (*This* cumbia [a type of music] *is good*).[2]

My subsequent interaction with Brenda is shown in Example 5. When I asked why this meme was so funny, Brenda struggled to explain what to her seemed so self-evidently hilarious. This meme relied on mock language (Hill, 2008), and I tried to ascertain whether Brenda recognized the implications of parodying a language and its speakers. First, I asked her whether these memes were ridiculing Nahuatl speakers. She seemed to agree that they were, but then clarified that this was just her interpretation. Next, I asked her to take the perspective of a Nahuatl speaker when assessing whether the meme was offensive. When she said she did not think it was offensive, I repeated her words and said "okay" skeptically, with a lengthened intonation, indicating I was expecting her to say more. In response, she began to describe a meme based on a duel scene from the movie *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. The top of the meme read, "Cuando en la calle te quieren presumir hablando Inglés"[3] (*When you're out and they want you to show off speaking English*) and was followed by an image of the

Example 5

Valerie:	So wha—why is it funny?
Brenda:	Because you add T L,
	like ((inaudible)) ((Luis and Brenda laughing))
Valerie:	Okay.
Brenda:	((Inaudible))
Valerie:	So do you think all these memes are making fun of people who speak—
Brenda:	Yeah.
Valerie:	They are?
Brenda:	But for me.
	I don't know— ((Shaking head no))
Valerie:	So if you spoke Nahuatl,
Brenda:	Yeah.
Valerie:	Do you think it would be offensive?
Brenda:	I don't know.
	I don't think so.
Valerie:	You don't think so.
	Okay.
Brenda:	In this one, ((points to *Harry Potter* meme))
	When a person tries to, ((paraphrasing first line of meme in English)
	Like, if someone—
	((turns to Luis for help))
Valerie:	Do you see the Harry Potter one? ((To Luis and Jun))
Luis:	Oh yeah.

character Draco Malfoy—a spoiled, arrogant boy wizard—saying "Scared, Potter?" The next line read, "Pero tu comienzas a hablar en Náhuatl xdxd" (*But you start talking to them in Nahuatl*; xdxd is an emoticon that means one is laughing so hard that one's eyes are closed). This was followed by an image of the hero, Harry Potter, responding in Nahuatl—"Nikpia maukatilisti neuatl nimexika"[4] (*I am afraid I am Mexica*). Brenda referred to this meme, which depicted Nahuatl as a language of power, to justify her comment that she did not think she would be offended. That is, she focused on the only meme that depicted the language positively and ignored the multiple memes that relied on mock Nahuatl and stereotypes of Indigenous speakers as unsophisticated. To help Brenda deepen her thinking, I should have challenged her to analyze how Nahuatl and its speakers were depicted in these other memes and to connect the memes to broader ideologies about race and social class that shape the representation of Indigenous cultures. However, as with the previous example, this critical discussion was displaced by my need to first understand the meme.

As soon as I directed Luis and Jun's attention to the Harry Potter meme, the focus of the interaction shifted away from critically evaluating the memes and back to explicating them. After Luis and Brenda took turns explaining the Harry Potter meme to me, I checked with Jun to see if he had understood. This time, rather than paraphrasing Luis and Brenda's description, I asked them to re-explain the meme to Jun. Because they engaged him directly, the discussion about the Harry Potter meme was more reciprocal than the previous discussion of the *buchona* meme. However, it was not more cumulative (Alexander, 2017), as we stopped the activity just after Brenda and Luis finished explaining this meme to Jun.

Reflecting on this lesson, it seems as if substantial adjustments need to be made to both planned and interactional scaffolding in order to better foster dialogic interactions. The handout questions were much less useful than anticipated, as students' responses revealed that they did not share our understanding of the term "offensive." I expected that our students, who themselves were marginalized by language ideologies and racializing discourses, would be able to identify how at least some of the memes relied on prejudices or stereotypes, and—regardless of whether they themselves were part of the targeted group—recognize why this might be problematic. Instead, almost all students interpreted this question as simply asking whether they themselves felt offended. Consequently, many students replied that the memes were not offensive because they found them funny, as if the two categories were mutually exclusive. Of course, the challenge of helping students to adopt a critical stance is not unique to the ELD context (see also Corella, 2018), and so I should have expected that simply providing a Spanish translation of the word "offensive" would not have been adequate. Before giving students the handout, I should have unpacked the meaning of this word, eliciting their own definitions and criteria, and co-constructing a shared understanding of this key concept. Alternatively, I could have avoided

the nebulous term "offensive" and opted to frame the analysis in more concrete terms by asking students to identify any stereotypes or value judgments about particular languages, language varieties, or speakers in the memes; to articulate their own positionality in relation to the memes (that is, to decide whether they considered themselves to be part of the group whose language or culture was being represented); and to reflect on how their positionality informed their response to the meme. I should also have modeled the type of thinking we were expecting by analyzing a meme jointly and highlighting how their responses to certain types of questions required both a claim and evidence. I could have also built in more time between the individual written reflections and the small-group discussions to ascertain how students were approaching this task. That is, rather than just treating the written reflections as thinking time for the students, I should have used them as formative assessments.

I also needed to more realistically account for the time and space that multilingual learners would need to engage with such a cognitively and linguistically demanding task, as well as the SKILLS team's own lack of expertise regarding the materials. Although the team had organized the memes into different themes, we did not actually understand them except at the most superficial level (if that), and so we could not anticipate what students would bring up in discussions. The interactions fell short primarily in achieving the qualities of a reciprocal, cumulative, and purposeful discussion (Alexander, 2017). While students built on one another's descriptions of the memes, we never moved from an explanation of a specific meme to critical appraisal, much less to a comparative analysis of language ideologies or stereotypes operating across multiple memes. In order to stimulate a more cumulative and purposeful interaction, I needed to press students to justify their claims and pursue "Why?" questions over multiple turns (Windschitl et al., 2018). Also, to foster a more reciprocal interaction, I should have used discourse moves that promoted talk among students, such as asking students to react to, build on, or explain their peers' contributions (Michaels & O'Connor, 2015). Of course, simply using these moves would not have resolved the further difficulty of the time and energy needed to communicate across multiple languages, which would have required jointly orchestrated efforts from multiple class members.

In describing the ways in which the lessons could have been better scaffolded or implemented, we as authors do not mean to imply that the ongoing messiness of teaching the SKILLS curriculum can be avoided through instructional design alone. Developing trusting relationships with students, attending to the social dynamics of the classroom and the affective dimensions of teaching and learning, developing lessons that resonate with our students' interests and experiences, compensating for limitations in our own linguistic repertoires, engaging students in critical conversations, and moving beyond awareness of sociolinguistic injustices to action are all dimensions of the teaching/learning experience that we continue to grapple with,

sometimes more productively than others. However, the messiness in our efforts has also afforded us opportunities for both reflection and concrete action that will strengthen our teaching going forward.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have argued for the importance of leveraging youth cultural and linguistic knowledge as a foundation upon which opportunities for dialogic interactions can potentially be created to support students' language practices. Students' understanding of and appreciation for the value of their linguistic repertoires and cultural expertise enhanced their willingness to speak and experiment with language in class, to support the learning of others, and to participate in important discussions about language. However, we encountered challenges in promoting and supporting dialogic practices with multilingual learners, who were at the earlier levels of English development, which was more complex than we had initially anticipated (see also Alvarez et al., this volume).

In retrospect, it is clear that we did not foresee the wide range of planned and interactional scaffolds teachers needed to implement in order to support students to identify, analyze, and challenge issues of sociolinguistic justice. For example, we learned that students need more explicit modeling and systematic practice in identifying, analyzing, and challenging racial and linguistic ideologies as well as in engaging in interactions that are reciprocal, cumulative, purposeful, collective, and supportive. They also need more opportunities to first build contextual knowledge about the topic at hand so that they can draw on a broader knowledge base in addition to their lived experiences when engaging in critical dialogue. Moreover, teachers need opportunities to develop interactional skills and to practice utilizing strategic discursive moves to produce, guide, and sustain dialogic interactions. It was not until we collaboratively engaged in analyzing the interactions and teachers' reflections that we were able to see where the missed opportunities were. Thus, we stress the importance of teachers regularly, collaboratively, and critically reflecting not just on the effectiveness of lessons as a whole, but also on the particulars of their talk.

Based on our lessons learned, we propose the following strategies and conditions to create meaningful opportunities for increased dialogic interactions that may lead multilingual learners to engage critically within and beyond the classroom to challenge sociolinguistic injustice. We envision the following:

An interactional classroom culture where:

- Diverse ideas, feelings, and experiences are respected and valued;
- Students feel confident experimenting with and practicing all their languages; and
- Students have a space to safely ask questions and challenge inequities.

A sociolinguistic justice-oriented curriculum that:

- Engages with real-life issues and activities that foster critical thinking;
- Incorporates topics of personal relevance for students; and
- Equips students with strategies and tools to transform their knowledge into social action.

A co-learner teacher who:

- Rejects a deficit perspective and validates students' full range of linguistic and cultural resources to accomplish learning goals;
- Acknowledges the individual and collective expertise that students bring to the classroom;
- Models peer support and effective interactional scaffolding with the purpose of making participation accessible to all students;
- Encourages multidirectional collaboration that makes visible the significant contributions of different individuals; and
- Engages in continuous teacher reflexivity.

The exercise in reflective analysis presented in this chapter can serve as a model for future teachers in social justice-oriented programs to avoid similar missteps and missed opportunities. In our developmental journey as teachers working with multilingual learners, we continue to learn from the messiness of our efforts to engage students in dialogic interactions. The classroom interactions, imperfect as they were, not only provided opportunities for students to engage with content that validated many of their experiences, raised their critical awareness, and offered a relatively safe context to make sense of issues rarely addressed in ELD classrooms; they also informed student-researchers' growing commitment to the value of linguistic diversity and, through their SKILLS Day research projects, created an opportunity for multilingual learners to engage in advocacy for sociolinguistic justice.

Table 2.1 Transcription Conventions

Transcription Conventions	
(( ))	Nonverbal communication or transcriber comment
( )	Anonymized information (e.g., names, identifiers)
(*italics*)	English translation
—	Elongated syllable
. . .	Pause

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Notes

1. The SKILLS curriculum consists of thematic units with lesson plans that were developed and used by various instructors who have been involved with the program over the years. With every new implementation, the instructors generally alter the lesson plans to best meet the needs of the students in their current class. For this lesson, the third learning objective was modified for multilingual learners and the examples and activities were specifically selected for them.
2. The addition of the "tl" to "cumbia" indicates a form of mock Nahuatl, and "Ta'" is comparable to the use of "Da" in African-American Vernacular English.
3. The text from the meme is presented in its original form (i.e., "Inglés" is written with a capital "I," "Náhuatl" with a capital "N," and "tu" with no accent).
4. The phrase used for "I am afraid" appears to be a structure calqued from Spanish (M. Pharao Hansen, personal communication, April 8, 2020).

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