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Climate Humanities in the L2 Classroom: Radical Possibilities for an Uncertain Future

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INTERSPECIES MUTUAL AID BY ANDREA CONTE VIA JUST SEEDS OPEN ACCESS GRAPHICS COLLECTION

1. Introduction: Radical Pedagogies on Language and Climate toward a Critical DEI

Most academic disciplines, including the humanities, have gotten down to work to help mitigate the climate crisis. The recognition of humanists' unique contributions to climate scholarship has started with the creation of a transdisciplinary field frequently called "Environmental Humanities" other times "Climate Humanities." In fall 2020, the Climate Humanities initiative began at Columbia University, including "any work in which the climate crisis is addressed in and through the humanistic disciplines, or any partnership that brings together climate science with our areas of study" (Columbia University). As a result of a campus-wide collaborative effort from 2016 to 2018, Barnard College launched Barnard's Climate Action Vision, which is defined as "a 360-degree approach that prioritizes the role of women, people of color, and low-income communities in defining new paradigms for climate leadership" (Barnard College "Sustainability"). With an aim at crossing disciplinary and intellectual boundaries, Barnard currently offers an Environmental Humanities Minor and Concentration under the conviction that "the natural world always raises questions that are simultaneously scientific and social and, second, that any meaningful effort to address environmental challenges must emerge from both humanistic and scientific consideration" (Barnard College "EHMC").

As language and cultural studies faculty at Columbia and Barnard, we strongly believe that this notion of climate humanities critically connects with the work of DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) in contemporary higher education, and that it is imperative that this new field embrace the teaching and learning of second languages in the context of our university programs and beyond. When we think about DEI, we agree with Sara Ahmed in her critique of institutional commitments to diversity: understood as "non-performative," such commitments do not bring about what they name and work as a "containment strategy" (53). In this sense, and as pointed out in the article "Disrupting Diversity Management: Toward a Difference-Driven Pedagogy," in "our increasingly neoliberal culture, diversity programming functions as a dominant pedagogy -- a way to manage and assimilate difference into existing systems, rather than to engage it as a disruptive, dynamic, relational process" (281). Authors suggest, indeed, that "diversity" has become an empty discourse, turning into a "fixed commodity" (283) at times that, instead of making diversity open to exploration, is managed and shut down to make it fit within institutional constraints. That is why we propose to think in terms of a "Critical DEI" -- that is to say, we propose using the classroom as our battleground from which to engage in a "difference-driven pedagogy" that allows us to grapple with conflict from the bottom-up, establishing common practices that go beyond integrating diverse course offerings into the curriculum. Thinking about this within the realm of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) along with the climate crisis exhorts us to critically examine discourses -- what kind of culture is privileged, what kind of culture is erased, and what role language(s) play in the configuration of imaginaries.

Up to this moment, climate humanities mostly include environmental projects in anthropology, history, philosophy, geography, sociology, political science, and performing and visual arts. In the field of language arts, we discreetly start witnessing environmental research and education in literary and cultural studies. Second languages are not part of the equation yet. Climate discourse and action are relegated to single unit projects, lesson plans, or sections of the textbook, usually as a connecting thread to practice pre-established grammatical and lexical expressions (see, for example, Contreras et al.). Some initiatives are taking place in English as a Second Language (ESL) (Braselmann et al., British Council, Deetjen and Ludwig, Green Action ELT, Summer), but these are barely existent in other instances such as Spanish. We lack a true institutional and curricular conceptualization and restructuration of language education with respect to the climate emergency.

Our goal and research praxis is to include the teaching, learning, and study of languages, specifically the Spanish language, both in the area of climate humanities and in what a "critical DEI" might be and do across multiple scales of intervention, starting from the basic language programs, and beyond serving a mere public relations strategy for the institution's benefit. Accordingly, this article explores the current politics and practices of language teaching and learning in higher education in the US, and the ethical dilemmas that we face as instructors of Spanish as a Second Language (L2) with a focus on climate emergency. By addressing how Spanish L2 education works and whom it serves, we propose radical curricular possibilities for advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the L2 classroom centering on climate and sustainability. Because language matters and disrupts. Language is the main sociocultural mediating tool for cognitive development through which we build thought and knowledge of the world, a tool for inter and intrapersonal construction (cf. Negueruela-Azarola et al. 2023). We are striving for inclusivity and a climate dialogue starting from below, in the university basic language programs. This is the time to listen to, rethink, and talk climate in languages other than English. Moving in such a direction is appealing to an increasingly diverse faculty and student body, making space for those whose heritage languages and cultures go beyond the mainstream English discourse.

2. The Trunk of the Tree: A Critical DEI from Below

This initiative envisions the interconnection between language (ideologies)/(socio)linguistics, culture, social justice, and the climate crisis in our core language curriculum. Carleton College's InTeGrate initiative enumerates all the benefits that bringing sustainability into our teaching offers to student learning, such as "establishing relevance, bridging course content to

current topics in the news, and making the course connected to other disciplines" ("Sustainability"). It also details two of the primary obstacles faculty encounter when planning to incorporate topics of sustainability into a course: time and content overload. Through a tree metaphor, they propose to relate topics of sustainability to the core content in order to overcome this barrier. The idea is not to think about climate and sustainability as a branch or a twig of our classes (i.e., an 'add-on'), but instead make it part of the course trunk. For instance, our departments have offered advanced content seminars that address the climate crisis in their syllabi at Barnard ("Between Science Fiction and Climate Fiction," Prof. Orlando Bentancor; see Betancor et al.) and Columbia ("Nature, Capital, and Environmental Cultures," Prof. Ana Fernández-Cebrián). Climate is the trunk of these courses. The InTeGrate model is equally course-specific. We are pushing beyond the limits of the InTeGrate framework and building this conceptual metaphor into departmental programs.

Before taking these elective seminars, students sometimes need to first learn the language in basic-level language courses. What happens is that there is often a gap and lack of continuity between language programs and advanced content courses in cultural studies across higher education nationwide (see Kern). Reconciling the language-cultural studies split Kern refers to -- not only through literacy, but more specifically through climate discourse literacy in the second language -- is what paved the road for us to challenge ourselves to make climate the trunk of the tree. As Megan Cole mentions, "integrating the humanities and the sciences at every stage of climate scholarship -- not incorporating the humanities at the final stages of scholarship, as an afterthought -- will be crucial to ensuring that climate mitigation strategies are equity-focused and sustainable" (2799). Thus, in teaching, which cannot be detached from scholarship, the incorporation of climate discourse has to start at the foundational level: in the basic language program, the trunk of the departmental tree. We cannot ignore the fact that languages are a core component of the humanities, and considering the great number of students that fulfill the language requirements through our basic language offerings, working at the level of the tree trunk means merging climate and sustainability with the language program.

The current Spanish basic language program at Columbia/Barnard offers a four-semester sequence of elementary and intermediate-level courses for which an average of 900 students register each semester. At Columbia University, the Foreign Language requirement is part of the Core Curriculum. The requirement may be completed with the satisfactory completion of the second term of an intermediate language sequence. The Barnard language requirement is two courses at any level, without exception. After students complete our intermediate-level courses, they may take Advanced Spanish through Content classes, which focus on specific topics to offer an intensive exposure to the language through written and oral practice. This broader approach initially seemed more challenging than designing a content course on the topic because language courses traditionally revolve around explicit language instruction and acquisition, but it introduces a much-needed teaching paradigm shift in the long run. To start talking climate in the trunk and branches of the tree, we have to transform the roots first. How? In addition to the inherently radical approach of incorporating climate and sustainability in the tree trunk of university academic programs, we strive for sustainable teaching practices in the L2 classroom. The following ethical dilemma has driven our thinking since we started to conceive of this curricular innovation: how can we teach and learn Spanish -- a colonial language mostly in Latin America, but also in the US, Africa, Asia, and even Oceania -- in the context of climate and the environment without somehow perpetuating the colonial imperative (del Valle, Train)? How to avoid propagating "colonialingualism," in other words, "privileging dominant colonial knowledges, languages, and neoliberal valorizations of diversity" (Meighan 146)? If we acknowledge that the climate crisis is the result of intersectional colonial and neocolonial processes at various levels, we need to decolonize our teaching dynamics (Behari-Leak, Mintz, Phipps, Twyman-Ghoshal and Lacorazza). To tackle these questions, we propose a root-level transformation of the language program that, scaffolded by the following teaching principles, will allow for a curricular development within the frame of critical DEI:

1. Contextualization of an often decontextualized language teaching
2. Decentralization of climate discourse in English toward an integration of climate discourse in other languages
3. Shared expertise and transdisciplinarity toward an integrated approach

As a first step to implement the above mentioned pedagogical approach, we are delivering a fourth-semester Spanish course on topics of climate discourse. Spanish Intermediate II is the last semester course in the basic language program at Columbia/Barnard and in Columbia's language requirement. An average of 200 students take this class each semester. For many, the experience in this course is decisive in choosing whether to continue with advanced Spanish courses toward a major, minor, or concentration in Hispanic Studies. Reworking one of the sections of this course at this key moment in their academic journey helps students bridge the gap between the language program and advanced-level study, while also enabling the implementation of SLA courses from a critical social justice perspective, focused on the living nature of languages and their interconnection with society beyond academia.

This course centers on developing students' critical thinking skills through the analysis of climate-related topics, emphasizing a range of diverse texts -- such as literature, film, documentaries, social networking platforms, press articles, and realia. Students engage deeply with these materials, enhancing their communicative skills and metalinguistic awareness as

they critically assess various representations of the climate emergency across different media. The course contextualizes language by addressing the colonial history and ongoing impact of Spanish and its regional varieties, ensuring that the voices of marginalized communities -- such as women, racialized groups, and indigenous peoples -- are actively part of the conversation. Students compare climate discourse across the Spanish-speaking world, analyzing rhetorical and aesthetic choices, and explore how metaphors and communicative strategies in both indigenous and colonial languages shape environmental beliefs. Finally, the course bridges scientific knowledge in English with alternative epistemologies in Spanish, connecting academic and public spheres to address the political and social dimensions of the climate crisis. This reframed section works as a case in point to illustrate the paradigmatic shift that we envision for post-secondary teaching and learning of L2 Spanish, based on the teaching principles and learning outcomes previously listed and further developed in the following sections.

2.1 Contextualization of an Often Decontextualized Language Teaching

Spanish is the second most spoken language in the US. It is not surprising, then, that the teaching of Spanish has become a highly institutionalized professional practice (del Valle). However, perceptions about the language or, better said, its speakers, are complex, multiple, and often contradictory. While the Spanish language and its speakers are often marginalized, minoritized, and delegitimized in the US, Spanish is also perceived as "a valuable, standardized global language" (del Valle 29), as both a local and global sociocultural commodity that facilitates an entrance to national and global marketplaces. Given its recognized instrumentality for professional growth, as well as its ability to connect learners to their linguistic heritage (Carreira and Kagan 57), Spanish is the language that the vast majority of students choose to fulfill the requirement at US universities (Lusin et al, "MLA Report on Enrollments in Languages Other Than English," 49).

Spanish is often taught in the US from an instrumental perspective that is accompanied by a structural view of languages. Under these ideological premises (del Valle), the language is still conceptualized as a disembodied resource. ACTFL's 5Cs goal areas for learning languages (Communications, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, Communities) stress the application of learning a language by creating meaning beyond the instructional setting through the interaction with multiple cultures and multilingual communities. The problem is that curriculums, students, and instructors are still very much exclusively focused on a decontextualized teaching/learning of grammar, which is too often perceived as a synonym of what "language" is, and on certain grammar structures as the result *of* learning more than a tool *for* learning (Negueruela 190-1). When cultural, ideological, and socio-political issues are brought into the L2 syllabus, it is frequently done as an addendum -- a leaf of the twig -- for example in separate sections of the textbook, or as a connecting thread to practice pre-established grammatical and lexical expressions. Paul J. Meighan asserts that even translanguaging (García and Wei) and plurilingual approaches, which have been promoting more equitable language education, "still tend to reflect the knowledge and belief systems of dominant, nation-state, 'official,' and/or colonial languages as opposed to those of endangered and Indigenous languages" (146). In other words, although we live in an increasingly interconnected world in which multilingualism is the norm, the monolingual imperative prevails through the imagined "one-nation, one-language, one-culture" ideological motto associated with the idea of a nation-state.

A consequence of this is the (not so) implicit ideological supremacy of certain varieties -- i.e., white, peninsular, urban, monolingual, "official," standard, academic -- that are erroneously perceived as "neutral." This assumed "neutrality" and "usefulness" of said varieties of Spanish imply the erasure of other varieties and languages in contact. By "erasure" we refer to the process by which language ideology, in simplifying the sociolinguistic field, renders some people and sociolinguistic phenomena invisible (Irvine and Gal 38). This process of linguistic erasure also discredits other knowledge epistemologies that do not fall under the western gaze. In the L2 classroom, teaching materials -- whether textual or audiovisual -- used to develop communicative competence are still typically selected or created in a monolingual format. Even when efforts are made to help students understand that European varieties are not "the languages" *per se*—through exposure to a diverse array of regional varieties—the underlying belief that only the dominant linguistic norms are "correct" still persists. Furthermore, a specific nation (or sense of *nationness*) is assumed to be represented by those geolects, erasing other co-existing varieties, often racialized or spoken by lower classes. For example, our current program's textbook offers the opportunity to listen to the same texts in four different regional varieties: those "corresponding to" Colombia, Spain, Mexico, and Cuba. However, Mexican varieties from indigenous populations are rarely shown in the classroom, nor are Afro-Cuban dialects, for instance.

This type of linguistic and cognitive imperialism (Battiste 2017) is what Meighan calls "colonialingualism," which "upholds colonial legacies, imperial mindsets, and inequitable [pedagogical] practices" (146). Although Meighan refers to English language education, Spanish also carries "a colonial, imperialist legacy and a eurocentric, human-centered worldview" (147). Meighan adds that colonialingualism "is subtractive and detrimental to multilingual, multicultural learners' identities and heritages; endangered, Indigenous languages and knowledges; minoritized communities; and our environment" (146-7), since indigenous languages and knowledges are closely interrelated to culture and land (Chiblow and Meighan 2022, 2023). Accordingly, following an inquiry-based learning approach based on research, group work, presentations, debates, and external collaborations with expert voices from wide-

ranging disciplines, the students in our new intermediate course consult, understand, and share initiatives by indigenous communities that address the climate crisis and promote sustainable practices. The work done by La Plataforma de Pueblos Indígenas para enfrentar el Cambio Climático in Perú, the series *Somos indígenas* released by UNAI (United Nations Academic Impact), or the Salvadoran testimonies presented by PNUD (United Nations Development Programme) as part of its Climate Voices Campaign are examples of these. Through the study of these types of actions, students critically practice their listening comprehension of non-normative accents, while indigenous voices are truly heard and become part of the climate conversation. From a descriptive exposure to language(s) (as opposed to the prevailing monocentric prescriptivism), students explore, discuss, and, in some cases, unlearn traditionally ingrained perceptions of these linguistic varieties and voices.

In their research on the relationship between language and environmental ideologies, Fine et al. suggest that "the removal of a language from its environmental context can result in more harmful environmental practices by divorcing it from the ecological knowledge in which it arose" (86). The decontextualization of language in the creation of standard forms of communication, such as scientific discourse and other types of academic writing -- reflected in certain pedagogical practices as well -- lead to non-inclusive, non-equitable, and non-diverse academic and institutional dynamics, and at the same time establish unsustainable environmental practices by using "forms that obscure agentive and affected participants" (87). In our pedagogical proposal for L2 teaching and learning, we reveal the colonial moves that continue to cause the erasure of indigenous languages and the undermining of indigenous ownership over their languages and environmental epistemes. We highlight these racialized languages and study these epistemes in contact with the target language. In the classroom, this translates, in the first place, into the explicit analysis of the systematicity of bilingual discourse and, second, into the teaching of literacy as a basis for cultural analysis (Kern). The languages that are in contact with Spanish/es in the US, Latin America, and Spain -- together with those that were lost or are on the verge of extinction -- are embraced, included, and studied from a sociolinguistic perspective of bilingualism beyond structuralist, synchronic notions of language and identity, and modern views of nationhood (Heller).

Audiovisual texts such as the short films *Ja chomobicho baneni (La última tinaja)* (2020) and *El tiempo es agua* (2017), the documentary *Sembradoras de vida* (2019), or films like *Guaraní* (2016), are bilingual works that bridge language, colonial and indigenous identities, national imaginaries, and the land. More specifically, the bilingual Spanish-Quechua documentary directed by the Sarmiento brothers centers on five women from the Andean highlands and their ongoing efforts to maintain a traditional and organic way of working the land guided by an Andean cosmovision in which women and the earth are deeply interrelated. In a world where *patrias* -- i.e,. fatherlands -- have exploited ecosystems and deceived their inhabitants, we need to listen to "the mothers of the lands" and their wisdom on "the connections between plants and animals, between diseases and what we eat as well as the differences in taste between organically grown food and those following a more industrial method of growing and harvesting" ("Mothers"). Meanwhile, the film by Zorraquín is a bilingual piece in Spanish, Guaraní, and Jopará -- a mixed variety of Spanish and Guaraní spoken in Paraguay -- analogous to "Spanglish" in the US. In the movie, Guaraní is understood by the protagonist's grandfather as the language of the Paraguayan nation, closely tied to the land and resistant to change. However, his granddaughter, more fluent in Spanish and Jopará, represents a more flexible and less masculinist imaginary of the nation(s).

Through these texts, students learn to recognize and name common (socio)linguistic patterns when two or more languages are in contact -- loanwords (integrated and non-integrated), calques (semantic and syntactic), or code changes (inter- or intrasentential, in markers of the speech, etc.) -- which contradict the mistakenly assumed idea that multilingual speech is indicative of linguistic incompetence. Students realize that "not everything goes" in multilingual discourse, since language alternation has restrictions; i.e., that of structural equivalence or that of free morpheme (Poplack, 1980). This development of metalinguistic awareness will positivize their perception toward bilingual practices, since only those speakers who have a certain morphosyntactic command of both languages are capable of respecting these restrictions and participating in specific pragmatic intentions when code-switching. With the critical analysis of these texts, students connect those discursive moves not only to pragmatic intentions by the characters or participants but also to historical, ideological, and sociopolitical implications.

The fact that students strengthen their communicative, metalinguistic, and literacy competence in Spanish–as well as their critical thinking skills–through climate-related weekly readings and critical analysis of diverse types of texts, portrays language as a living phenomenon that is intrinsically connected to its sociocultural history and surroundings. That said, culture is not studied as a mere excuse to mobilize predetermined language structures. Instead, we study culture through language and language through culture, analyzing metalinguistically ideological, moral, and socio-political implications of language uses and choices both synchronically and diachronically. We cannot study languages without considering its users as we cannot study climate emergency and climate discourse in the Anthropocene without acknowledging the impact of human activity on the planet. We recognize and highlight "the impact of climate change on culture, and […] the potential of culture for global climate action" (UNESCO). This allows for a connection between what students learn in the classroom and the outside world and for a better preparation to dissect and generate environmental

discourse about the present and future of our planet in Spanish.

2.2 Decentralization of Climate Discourse in English Toward an Integration of Climate Discourse in Other Languages

A topic crucial to this new paradigm of climate-language teaching is how the climate crisis is discursively framed in scientific debates, in the media, and in diverse cultural productions in the Spanish-speaking world, including the US. In class, we explore how climate discourse is reframed and renegotiated, and how the linguistic and rhetorical strategies deployed are shaped by the (geo)political economy of climate debates. "Right now" (argued hooks in 2003, but this is still accurate as of today), "free speech and the right to dissent are being undermined by conservative, mass media-pushing dominator culture. The message of dominator culture would have little impact if it were not for the power of mass media to seductively magnify that message" (11-12). Just recently, journalist Matthew Yglesias posted the following comment on X regarding Genevieve Guenther's book *The Language of Climate Politics* (2024): "The idea that this is primarily a linguistic problem -- rather than an engineering, physics, economics, IR, and congressional bargaining problem -- that requires the expertise of a doctor of Renaissance literature [referring to Genevieve] to help us solve [the problem] is the problem" (@mattyglesias). By quoting Lakoff as the epigraph of the book's introduction, Guenther defends that action on climate crisis requires the right framing: "Political ground is gained not when you successfully inhabit the middle ground, but when you successfully impose your framing as the 'common-sense' position" ("Conservatives," qtd. in Guenther 1). Our role, then, as facilitators of knowledge in the classroom, is that of providing students with tools to interrogate the source of information and then perform a mediating role between specialized knowledge production and the public.

Certainly, how we frame language as well as its context in use shapes how we perceive and interact with the environment. For instance, Fine et al. note that in English, we refer to living organisms such as trees through the pronoun "it" whereas in Potawatomi, a Central Algonquian language historically spoken in the US Great Lakes region, members of the living world are categorized as animate (85). Fine et al. also quote linguist Michael Halliday to explain that grammatical features like "the use of mass nouns for finite resources, such as 'soil' and 'water,' which are grammatically unbounded…convey an air of limitlessness that is counter to reality" (86). These scholars prompt us to explore how mass media "portrays climate change as uncertain through epistemic markers even as the effects of the climate crisis become more and more apparent" (87), and even advise us against the use of terms such as "climate change," because it elicits no specific consequences and can even imply that the climate is changing with no human interaction. They stand up for the terms "climate crisis" and "climate emergency" because they metaphorically offer "a greater sense of immediacy and alarm," although these may erase to some extent "the connections between the climate crisis and the crisis of colonial violence that Indigenous communities have endured for centuries" (87).

As a matter of fact, some metaphors can also often "mediate scientific concepts in a way that makes them more understandable to non-expert audiences, while also affecting how those concepts are perceived" (Fine et al. 86), while others are deeply embedded in English and European philosophy or have a direct and harmful impact on indigenous voices. Fine et al. enumerate some of these (85-6). For example, (1) the *terra nullis* metaphor to refer to newly colonized lands imagines a new land as "empty" so that colonial names can then be given (see also Saïd); (2) natural systems as inanimate "machines" in colonial languages vis-à-vis more animistic ways of understanding these systems in indigenous languages (Rout and Reid); or (3) the metaphor of biodiversity as a "library" for the benefit and extraction of humans (Stibbe). In her proposal of metaphors that seek to cultivate a mutualistic relationship between scientific and traditional ecological knowledge, Robin Wall Kimmerer claims that "indigenous ways of framing and communicating concepts, through shared narratives and symbols, effectively engage the power of metaphors to encompass both material and spiritual dimensions of a matter" (50).

Through a thoughtful engagement with these practices, in our course, we put forward the need to study metaphorical figures of speech as regards climate in the target L2 Spanish in comparison with figures of speech in English and indigenous languages in contact. We tackle the geopolitical differences that are central to the climate debate by making students comparatively examine texts published both in the United States and in the rest of the Spanish-speaking world, questioning issues of diversity and inclusion by paying attention to rhetorical and aesthetic decisions. Students learn to infer the discursive features in the scientific and public spheres that are used to talk about climate, specifically distinguishing how metaphors and communicative standards in indigenous and colonial languages and cultures shape our environmental beliefs and actions differently. As a pedagogical example, in class we compare the mainstream US film *Don't Look Up* (2021) -- a satirical metaphor of the political, scientific, and societal responses to the climate crisis (discourses) -- with alternative Latin American and Spanish narratives that go beyond Global North perspectives, such as those in the films or documentaries *El Agua* (2023), *Distancia de rescate* (2021), *Utama* (2022), *Maya Land: Listening to the Bees* (2022) and *La Tierra de Azaba* (2020).

As a unit project, students question, support, or propose various metaphorical resources to frame the climate crisis in the target language. As an illustration, some students analyzed the linguistic strategies of doomerist discourse in Spanish (vis-à-vis examples of this discursive position in English) in the media and/or political arena, and developed metaphors that suggest potential responses. In that regard, Zion Lights condemns doomerism as it is not going to solve climate change, end poverty, or address air pollution, and believes that to achieve climate-smart global prosperity, we need to use the language of solutions. Other students also carried out

a comparative project that examined in the target language the metaphorical discourse of deniers and that of those perceived as alarmists. Guenther classifies the network of climate discourse in the following groups: lukewarmers, techno-optimists, the alarmed, climate scientists, and doomers (9-25). It is interesting to see which discourses in Spanish fall into these categories -- and by whom these are produced. It is also compelling to survey which metaphors in the L2 are misleading -- in the sense that they seek to calm any concern and anesthetize any reaction–and dismantle them. For example, the notion of *ola de calor* ("heat wave" as well in English) refers to something temporary that erupts and then retreats without any consequences. So, we can deduce, we don't need to do anything about it. Just endure the anomaly and wait for it to leave as it came (Castro). However, data shows that the climate crisis is incentivizing the frequency and duration of these high temperatures. Should we still be speaking of "waves"? Other students analyzed metaphorical resources related to war or disease to address the climate emergency. Another group explored which metaphors were used during Hurricane María both in Puerto Rico and the US in contrast to the more romanticized depictions of natural disasters in 19th-century poetry.

We can indeed approach climate discourse through literature as well. How about studying which metaphors and other stylistic resources are used in the poems on/for climate, such as "Mujer-Tierra" de Rosana Toro, "La canción de Gaia" (Joy Harjo), "Oda a la tierra" (Pablo Neruda), or *Benko enuuru/Ojos de hormiga* (Morela Maneiro)? Finally, a way of integrating indigenous languages in contact with Spanish is by means of indigenous words that are untranslatable in the target language. The book *Intraducibles* lists and explains words in Mexican indigenous languages that have no easy translation into Spanish because they convey a different cosmovision, such as the ecological word *jiku'u* in Dibaku (or Cuicateco language). This term conveys the place where guardians that protect their water, flora, and fauna live. These spiritual beings provoke disease in those who pollute or cut trees, or take them to their world with no prospect of return (147). Assignments like this one present an opportunity for students to consider terms in their own languages that may or may not relate to this concept.

Toward the commitment to sustainable environmental practices, all of these pedagogical applications help to unlearn the "epistemological error in dominant western thought, characterized by linguistic imperialism and cognitive imperialism; the view that humans are superior to nature; and white (epistemological) supremacy" (Meighan 146) -- still very much present in commodified institutional DEI practices -- and co-create knowledge with other voices. The idea is to generate metaphorical competence and awareness in students so that they understand metaphors as an ubiquitous cognitive phenomenon, and a mediator of our comprehension of the world (see Peña Pascual 2023). We believe that this inclusive engagement at diverse epistemic and (socio- and ethno-) linguistic levels promotes the acquisition of conceptual, creative, pragmatic, and semantic discursiveness in the L2 classroom. Our main goal and challenge is to diversify climate discourse, predominantly in English, while mainstreaming climate and sustainability education so that students are as prepared as possible from multiple standpoints to help the world in which they live.

2.3 Shared Expertise and Transdisciplinarity Toward an Integrated Approach

Second Language Acquisition courses are grounded in active learning strategies, flipped classroom methodologies, and student-centered environments. These principles have a solid base and are at the center of project-based curricula, like the ones we work with in L2 Spanish. However, when it comes to teaching climate as an embedded object of analysis in a language course, since critical thinking skills are essential to the task, it is necessary to go one step further. Hence, we propose here an approach to language and climate teaching that is rooted in critical pedagogy -- that is to say, that encourages students to unpack and challenge the climate discourses they encounter. In order for this questioning that is expected and ingrained in our courses as a learning goal to be an active process, it needs to be nurtured by two mutually-reinforcing principles: shared expertise and transdisciplinarity.

We envision the classroom as a space for action and experimentation, exchanges, and, above all, multidirectional cooperation. This horizontal environment is possible when there exists a nurtured collaboration between students and instructor. The instructor's role is, therefore, centering students' voices as well as channeling their queries. In this way, we can talk about "shared expertise" in the sense that the class builds on each one's participation and input, where all the contributions are valid and necessary in order to gain a common understanding of the subject matter. The idea of shared expertise goes beyond content itself and builds on a concept coined by James Engell -- that of "co-mentorship," that encourages us to consider our work in the classroom alongside students. Engell argues that, in order to engage with the climate crisis, "we must act as mutual, reciprocally subservient co-mentors" in a sort of multiple mentorship (25). In this model of co-mentorship, he underlines the importance of connection, "not mere addition" (29), suggesting: "we become a community of mutual, reciprocal mentors, collaborators, when we listen to -- and teach, and teach with -- those outside our own training and bailiwick" (27). This kind of co-mentoring is feasible if we take into serious consideration the knowledge and ideas that everyone brings into the classroom, where each is seemingly willing to listen to others and build on each other's ideas, while raising awareness of the challenges faced when we position ourselves outside of our communities of scholarly practice.

One way to put these concepts into practice, even at the elementary level, is to start from what we all share in the classroom: NYC, the city we live in, is our common ground. The NYC Mayor's Office has been running an

Office of Climate & Environmental Justice since Bill DeBlasio was mayor (2014-2021). Their website (https://climate.cityofnewyork.us/es/) is roughly translated to many languages, and Spanish is one of them. There is a lot of information about their working team, what they do specifically in the city, the hazards that the city faces, and so on. One section of the website includes maps of green areas and what has been called "cool zones" in all five boroughs (available here, with an option to Google translate if needed). In courses that are increasingly diverse in terms of social background and origins, approaching the city we all live in from this perspective is indeed a way of understanding the connection between climate discourses and climate actions, as well as the connection between neighborhoods, their demographics, and socioeconomic status. Spoiler alert: not all areas in heat vulnerability indexes 4-5 have resources to fight extreme heat. A question arises: which ethnicities and economic statuses are predominant in those areas? That is a discussion to be held in class.

One of the learning objectives of the Language Program is that students identify the geographic and cultural diversity of the Spanish-speaking world, and what better way to do so than by starting from our current location. The conversation becomes even more enriching when issues of climate justice, race, social class, and linguistic background come into play. Students, indeed, are learning the tools they need in the target language to realize a problem around them and to question the reality they live in. This is an area of transdisciplinary shared expertise because, presumably, maybe only a few are experts on the climate emergency, but all can contribute with their knowledge of the city, to begin with, and the prospective majors and concentrations they will be pursuing -- incorporating their own interests in urban studies, architecture, engineering, or public health.

What would an assignment look like under these coordinates? The main learning goal is for students to identify the urban and climatic diversity of NYC, and to be able to connect such identification with bigger issues. In greater terms, they will be performing a mediating role between official climate discourses and daily lives -- unpacking the impact of climate discourses in their own routines. First, students are provided with a vocabulary sheet that they can consult, if needed, with keywords to help them understand the main areas of concern. Then, students are asked to take a look at the website before class, get familiar with it, and bring any doubts they might have. In class, we will work with the map accessible on the projector and the class will be divided into five groups, one per borough. With that map and legend opened as a reference to all, each group is assigned a specific neighborhood within their borough with the goal of briefly describing it in terms of location, demographics, and green areas. Each group can have a poster-sized blank paper to draw and add the information that they will share with the class. Next, they will also identify the areas where NYC has (or has not) taken action. Each group will share the information with the class in an interactive round of presentations that the instructor can model once and then each group can mimic. Finally, the instructor might facilitate a conversation about the findings, asking about the possible relation between the city's interventions and the specific areas' living conditions.

We have explored the idea of shared expertise as a kind of multiple mentorships, and as such it is inseparable from a transdisciplinary approach. We talk about transdisciplinarity as opposed to interdisciplinarity because we are combining diverse disciplines to form a new integrated framework (Choi and Pak 2006). Hence, it is not just about adding different parts even if this addition brings us to a new level of interrogation; rather, it is about getting to an outcome totally different from what could be expected from the addition of the parts. We aim not to cover grammatical structures as isolated units (in this case, describing places and reading maps), but to merge linguistic understanding of keywords within the context where those words gain meaning. Interdisciplinarity analyzes, synthesizes, and harmonizes links between disciplines into a coordinated and coherent whole (354). Transdisciplinarity, on the contrary, integrates the natural, social, and health sciences in a humanities context, and transcends their traditional boundaries (355). The idea, then, is to bring into the language classroom the various expertises of our students and ourselves in order to learn together how to challenge climate discourses. For that, we need more than just learning the basic grammar structures of the language. We need the student who can bring an urban studies-based analysis, the student who can bring a more public health vision, and so on. In fact, as instructors coming from the field of Cultural Studies, we both take our own expertise beyond language instruction alone, performing a labor that allows us to meaningfully connect the curriculum with the school community.

For these reasons, rather than thinking about "covering" content, we agree with Wiggins and McTighe when they argue for "uncovering ideas." Thinking about ideas rather than content foments students' engagement and participation, since students are asked to draw on what they already know. "Essential questions," hence, "are designed to challenge preconceived notions and force students to stretch their thinking, using course content to support and inform answers." Following a student-centered design, topics are treated with depth rather than breadth, and students' takeaways consist of durable, foundational knowledge that will support present and future learning. Climate, like language, is transversal to all subjects. Rather than designing around content coverage, the course is conceived in terms of "big ideas" that are universal in application and timeless, work as a conceptual lens for any study, and, most importantly, require uncovering. What makes a question essential is that it "stimulates vital, ongoing rethinking […] of assumptions and prior lessons" (Big Ideas and Essential Questions). This prompts us as instructors and students as well to reflect on the value of what is covered in class and its impact in our daily lives, in the past, present, and future. These conditions invite an atmosphere in the classroom that is both innovative and passionate, since it fosters a community of learners where everyone shares

and participates, where everyone owns their own responsibility in the game, and where critical-thinking skills act as a true tool for collectively-informed empowerment.

Undoubtedly, the climate crisis places everyone in an unprecedented state of mind and feeling and requires a global, complex, and interconnected response that involves all disciplines. If we commit to a learning process that is transformational (Gannon 150), that is to say, that gives us the capacity to instill change, we need a point of departure with roots deeply embedded in transdisciplinary transformation -- truly changing how we teach across disciplines. If we intend this approach to climate humanities to indeed be an institutional and epistemological transformation in dialogue with DEI efforts, we cannot ignore the question of language -- many times overlooked in discussions of diversity -- and how that question is inseparable from the spheres from where climate narratives and discourses emanate. Transdisciplinarity, therefore, is also part of a decolonial effort, because language cannot be contained within boundaries.

3. Conclusion: Radical Hope to Think about the Present and Future of the Planet

This approach, by connecting Climate Humanities and SLA, challenges DEI institutional dynamics from below, aiming at transforming the conditions of what it means to labor for diversity, equity, and inclusion right now, in the midst of a global climate crisis and in a rapidly-changing world. The initiative is born at the roots of the curricular level, is nurtured via transdisciplinary connections, and, last but not least, will inform a critical DEI in that it explores the tensions around knowledge, power, and discourses, granting an increasingly diverse student body the tools to grow and flourish in an uncertain future. As such, our proposal is born in the classroom because that is the space from where we can actually set a living example of what it means to be committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion beyond institutional expectations and promises.

Our vision attends to many of the issues inherent in SLA -- such as colonialism and the impact of language on the reproduction of inequalities and old-fashioned visions of the nation -- and in pedagogy -- proposing student-centered environments intertwined with the climate emergency, that is assessed as a threefold discursive, humanitarian, and scientific crisis. By offering a balance between a theoretical, value-driven articulation of why this paradigm shift matters, and a more practical approach of how these ideas get embodied in our classroom, we are putting forward a focused intervention of language teaching as a site for advancing climate justice.

Despite this thoughtful and optimistic attempt, we acknowledge the resistances and obstacles faced in the classroom. Above all, we do know how pervasive is the mindset --prevalent in language curricula, instructors, and even students -- in which grammar is taught and learned as a decontextualized substratum of language. One of the problems with decontextualization is that grammar is understood as equivalent to the language itself instead of as a tool for learning a language, together with the aforementioned political stakes implied in this conceptualization. In our view, language is more than a requirement at the university level, since it is inherently transdisciplinary and central to all learning. Under the teaching principles developed here, we are advocating for a radical pedagogy that is decolonial and anti-racist, and that promotes social justice.

We should also recognize some of the tensions and challenges that we face at the institutional level. First of all, working at Ivy League institutions, we have the privilege of having sections capped at 15 students (a small number) and some resources that allow us to make out of our teaching practice a research topic, that is to say, funds to conduct scholarly research on teaching. However, in spite of that, as language lecturers in off-ladder positions, we do not receive as much institutional support as our counterparts in tenured positions. Therefore, we do have a higher teaching load, less time and funds for research, and, as a consequence, we often fall within a lower pay scale for a sometimes-wrongly assumed non-research position, as if teaching was detachable from research. For these reasons, the basic language program is perceived as having secondary value (Kern 21), when in reality, as we have argued here, it should be part of the main trunk, if not the roots. We will persist in exploring these tensions, navigating the problems even if solutions do not come easily. Hopefully the reader finds guidance here when strategizing how to overcome such a complex challenge.

And yet, we envision our present task with radical hope. A space between optimism and pessimism, where we embrace uncertainty. In this uncertainty, we don't surrender to the future of the climate crisis, but instead move forward without falling into the traps of "positive hope" or magical thinking (Valverde Gefaell; see also Bargués). Our present is, indeed, a place of meaning (hooks, *Teaching Community* 166). Without attentively analyzing and comprehending our present time, the future will become increasingly uncertain. If our overarching transformative, proactive, and collective goal is paving the way from below for a sustainable future that does not underwrite racism, colonialism, and class and gender inequality, it is required that we rely on our teaching practices as an equally radical form of hope: "A pedagogical praxis … that fosters openness and inclusivity, critical reflection, dialogue and conversation, and a commitment to making higher education accessible and meaningful for all of our students" (Gannon 6). Reflections are served and foundations are laid; let us begin the action.

Climate is an emergency. The scientific community (and the data) urge us to act immediately because our climate is changing faster than nature can adapt to it, including us. In other words, CLIMATE ESTÁ CABRÓN (as people say in Mexico) or CLIMATE ESTÁ JODIDO (as people say in Spain). However, we do not want you to

focus on the adjective but on the verb: ESTÁ. What is the difference between SER and ESTAR? If you have taken Spanish lessons, you would say that *ser* is what we perceive as the essence of people or things, and the verb *estar* is incidental, out of the norm, the result of our experience. So, climate ESTÁ … whatever adjective you want to use, you name it, but ESTÁ is incidental; there is room for hope. It is in our hands as educators to help make climate SER blank, your favorite adjective, again. Let's not waste it.

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