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Translanguaging Practices of a Multiethnic and Multilingual Deaf Family in a Raciolinguistic World and Beyond

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Abstract: In this autoethnography, I recount the translanguaging practices of my multiethnic and multigenerational signing deaf family in Manila, Philippines. I examine the impact of a multilingual upbringing on how family members function in various milieus, particularly in education. I discuss how language use throughout my childhood has impacted my experiences with languaging after immigrating to the United States as an adult. Interspersed in this personal narrative are traipses into historical and sociological observations about the Filipino community's view of the deaf identity and how deaf Filipinos have been and are still being regarded. Finally, I explore the promulgation and implementation of the language policies in my motherland and assimilation efforts of immigrant parents on the translanguaging practices of the Filipino deaf here in the United States. I describe the ways in which home discourse practices affect the educational experiences of deaf Filipino immigrants in the U.S.

Keywords: translanguaging; immigration; multilingualism; multiethnic; Philippines; Filipino; sign language; language policy; raciolinguistics; deaf people of color



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你每会说一门新的语言，
你就会过一种新的生活。
如果你仅仅知道一种语言，
那你只有一种生活。

Those who know many languages
live as many lives as the languages they know.
(Czech proverb)

1. Introduction

In the world outside of the United States, multilingualism is the norm rather than the exception. This is especially true in the Philippines where, depending on the manner of classification employed, the number of languages spoken ranges from 120 to 187 (McFarland 1994). Translanguaging, therefore, is a linguistic practice we Filipinos naturally do out of necessity, tradition, and culture. Accordingly, throughout this autoethnography, I use the term *translanguaging* to mean a process where individuals utilize their multilingual abilities to strategically determine usage of particular linguistic systems and their respective conventions, variations, registers, and discourses in certain contexts depending on the purposes and goals of the interactions and who the interlocutors are (García et al. 2021). Furthermore, through such process and primarily for reasons of practicality, these individuals “challenge the conventional understanding of language boundaries between . . . culturally and politically labelled languages” (Li 2018 in Conteh 2018) and transcend those boundaries, especially if they are deaf.

With multiple waves of people from other countries migrating into the Philippines since before it even became a country and in-country migration patterns occurring as a matter of course (Francia 2019), languages move more fluidly and in nuanced ways in

this country. This is true of the language repertoires of my multiethnic and multigenerational signing deaf family in Manila, Philippines. In order to acknowledge and accommodate the intricacies, complexities, and nuances that generally characterize translanguaging practices, I chose to employ the autoethnographic method which is a widely-used form of qualitative research (Ellis et al. 2010). Ethnographic approaches and, by extension, autoethnography, can provide valid sociolinguistic space in which to delve deeper into the multilingual lived experiences of families (Van Mensel and De Meulder 2021). In this autoethnography, I will recount how my family engages in translanguaging practices that make use of our linguistic proficiencies in most of the languages we have acquired or formally learned. I will describe the impact of such practices on how we navigate and function in various milieus, particularly in education. I have discussed the ethical issues of this recounting and description with my family and obtained their consent. I will examine some historical and sociological observations about the Filipino community's perspective on deaf identity and deaf Filipinos. Finally, I will explore the promulgation and implementation of the language policies in my motherland and assimilation efforts of immigrant parents on the translanguaging practices of deaf Filipinos; I describe the ways in which home discourse practices affect the experiences of deaf Filipinos in the U.S. deaf education system.

2. Profiles of My Multiethnic, Multilingual, Multigenerational Deaf Family

2.1. Father

My signing deaf father is a child of immigrant parents who moved from China to Manila Chinatown in the Philippines in the 1930s. With his parents and siblings, he uses Hokkaglish, a combination of Hokkien (Chinese language that is widely spoken in the Fujian province in southeastern mainland China where my paternal grandparents were from), Tagalog (indigenous language mainly used in the political, commercial, and educational sectors in Manila, the capital of the Philippines), and English (one of the two official languages in the Philippines). He grew up attending a Chinese immersion school in the 1950s and 1960s where he also learned Mandarin (the official language of China). He became deaf when he was a teenager due to a medical overdose and acquired Filipino Sign Language (or FSL, the sign language widely used by the Filipino deaf in the Philippines) by socializing with friends he made in the deaf community. He also uses FSL with his deaf wife, Hokkaglish with my OHCODA (Only Hearing Child of Deaf Adults) sister, FSL and Taglish (a combination of Tagalog and English) with me and my deaf sister, and Taglish with his hearing friends, employees, and people outside of the Filipino-Chinese and Filipino deaf communities.

2.2. Mother

My signing deaf mother was born deaf to hearing parents. My maternal side of the family has several deaf members that we know of in the past three generations. One of my mother's brothers is deaf as well. My mother attended and graduated from the oldest deaf school in the Philippines in the 1950s and 1960s. She used FSL and written English at school, FSL with her deaf brother, deaf friends, and housekeepers, a home sign system with her parents and other brother, and a combination of gestures, letter tracing on the inside of arms, and fingerspelling with her coworkers in the 1980s and into the 1990s.

2.3. OHCODA Sister

My OHCODA sister is younger than me by about a year. She attended Chinese immersion schools, one of them being our father's alma mater, in the 1980s and 1990s. She acquired FSL, Hokkien, Tagalog, and English at home and Mandarin (the official language of China) at school. She uses Hokkaglish with our father, her husband, her friends, and our paternal side of the family, Taglish with our maternal side of the family, her nanny growing up, our housekeepers, her coworkers, and with people outside of the Filipino-Chinese

community, FSL and Taglish with me and our other deaf sister, and FSL with our mother and deaf relatives.

2.4. Deaf Sister

My youngest sister was born deaf. She acquired English and FSL at home with Tagalog becoming a heritage language for her. In the 1980s and 1990s, she attended a deaf school in Quezon City that follows the total communication philosophy (an approach that uses combinations of communication methods in the classroom, including both signing and speech), then an oral deaf school (an approach where deaf students use spoken language in the classroom) in Manila, and then finally Clarke School for the Deaf in Massachusetts where she graduated from upper school. She learned ASL (American Sign Language) from friends and classmates at Clarke School. After she returned to the Philippines, she went on to attend and graduate from an international school in Manila. She uses FSL with our parents, her deaf husband, deaf relatives, and friends in the Filipino deaf community, FSL and Taglish with me, our OHCODA sister, and her three CODA (Children of Deaf Adults) children, Taglish with her coworkers, employees, and people outside of the Filipino deaf community, English with her classmates at the international school, and ASL with her Clarke School friends and with the international deaf community.

2.5. Author

I was apparently born hearing and became deaf at about one and a half years of age. I acquired Tagalog, English, and FSL at home. I use FSL and Taglish with my father and sisters, FSL with my mother, deaf relatives, and the Filipino deaf community, Taglish with hearing friends, classmates, and people outside of the Filipino deaf community, ASL with my deaf partner and deaf and signing friends here in the U.S., ASL and English with our KODAs (Kids of Deaf Adults¹), and English with people outside of the U.S. deaf communities. I was mainstreamed in an all-girls Catholic school growing up and used English and Tagalog in the classroom in the 1980s and 1990s. I also went to a Japanese language school based in Manila where I studied Nihongo (日本語, the Japanese spoken and written language) from 2007 to 2009. Later, I learned Nihonshuwa (日本手話 or Japanese Sign Language/JSL, the sign language widely used by the Japanese deaf community) through online classes and Japanese deaf friends though years of disuse means it is undergoing second language attrition. Lastly, I started acquiring ASL in 2013 through watching online videos, conversing with my partner and friends, and exposure to academic ASL use in graduate school starting in 2015.

3. Translingualism with Languages Exposed, Acquired, and Learned

Since birth, my sisters and I were exposed to and have been using Tagalog, English, Bisaya (Austronesian regional language most widely used in the Visayas, Palawan, and Mindanao), Hiligaynon (Austronesian regional language used in Western Visayas and Soccsargen and the second-most widely used spoken language in the Visayas), Hokkien, Mandarin, and FSL at home, in schools, and at work with varying degrees of fluency. Some of us acquired more languages later on in our lives (American Sign Language, Nihongo or Japanese language, and Nihonshuwa or Japanese sign language). We have attained varying degrees of proficiency levels across both the home languages and the second languages with FSL being one of the strongest and the pivot around which all the other languages revolve. Because we are deaf born to signing deaf parents who use FSL with us right from the start, the trajectory of our language acquisition parallels those of our hearing peers. Having signing deaf parents who use a signed and thus accessible language with us right after our birth means our first language acquisition has been made more than possible and it set us up to be able to acquire other first languages and second languages, hence making our translingualism also possible.

As expected, our languaging is, simply put, a mix. It would not be strange for us to produce an utterance that would include words from at least three languages that each of

us are most comfortable using (e.g., I often mix Tagalog, English, and FSL in one sentence). All the languages we know are being “accessed” (García et al. 2021) in accordance with the objectives of each particular situation and which languages the people involved know. Naturally, our translanguaging practice has implications and ramifications for all areas of our life, not just familial; our multilingual upbringing has a great impact on how we function in social, medical, societal, political, and educational contexts. All these contexts are intertwined and the languages used in each are dictated by how language ideologies come into play.

So how do language ideologies come into play? Especially because our home languages are rather diverse, raciolinguistic ideologies play out in the languaging of citizens even within the same nation as a matter of course, which is not surprising given that we have over 185 languages used in the Philippines. I would even venture to say that the basis of language policy in the country is rooted in raciolinguistic ideologies and this policing began the day we were forced to become one country by the Spanish colonizers in the 1500s (Francia 2019). To this day, Tagalog users have more political and economic clout than, say, the Hiligaynon speakers, a linguistic minority group my maternal grandparents’ side of the family belongs to. Mandarin users are seen as more elite than those who speak Hokkien (the language of my father’s clan). Chinese languages are seen as more sophisticated and “better” than Filipino languages. English trumps everything and those who can speak and write English fluently can go very far in life in the Philippines.

4. Familial and Social Translanguaging

As a multicultural and multilingual family, translanguaging is a linguistic practice that comes naturally to us and something we feel compelled to do as a matter of course to maximize our ability to communicate with the members of our clan and other people in our immediate circles. My sisters and I communicate using FSL with our mother. My deaf sister and I use FSL and Taglish (code-mixing of Tagalog and English) with our father while my OHCODA sister uses Hokkaglish (code-mixing of Hokkien, Tagalog, and English) with him. Evidently, our intrafamily communication is influenced by the language background of each member (Kusters et al. 2021) which, in turn, are affected by larger social contexts as outlined in their profiles and below. Additionally, because we use multiple languages within our family with members differing in use of language modalities, brokering is also done as a matter of course, especially since we have a mix of hearing, signing deaf, and oral deaf members (Kusters et al. 2021). For our family, language brokering is a linguistic liminal space where interpretations and other metalinguistic interconnections between languages and modalities occur and where we move beyond the boundaries of each language and modality to arrive to a space where there is mutual understanding of the content of the message.

As a result of how my parents were brought up, they each use different languages with their respective families. Our deaf mother communicates using FSL with her deaf brother and deaf relatives and a home sign system with her hearing parents, hearing brother, and hearing relatives. She also used FSL with school friends. She retired from work and still keeps in touch with her hearing coworkers. They communicate using a combination of gestures and fingerspelling. Our late-deafened father uses English, Hokkien, and Tagalog with his own family and hearing friends. After he became deaf as a teenager, he acquired FSL through friends he made in the deaf community.

Both our parents were members of a now-defunct deaf club, the Manila Silent Club (our father had been its president for quite some time, if not almost the entirety of the time the club existed). FSL is mainly used by the club during its meetings, parties, and events unless they deal with outside vendors. Growing up, we observed FSL as the dominant language of interaction with family friends and Tagalog, English, and Hokkien with extended family members. The schools my sisters and I were placed in determined the additional languages we use and choose to use in our respective social circles—my OHCODA sister

uses Hokkaglish, my deaf sister uses FSL and English, and I use Taglish and now ASL here in the U.S.

5. Medical Translanguaging

The interpreting field was not well-established in the Philippines until very recently, and clients are more likely to have FSL-English/Tagalog provision only in educational settings in metropolitan areas. As such, there was no system set in place to have interpreters in doctors' offices, clinics, and hospitals. When I was growing up, we relied on our hearing grandmothers or aunts to "interpret" for us when we visited doctors and when I, as a very sickly child, underwent medical procedures. Depending on whether the doctors in a clinic/hospital were in Manila Chinatown or in Makati City, our grandmothers or aunts would speak Taglish (grandmother on mother's side) or Hokkien (grandmother or aunt on father's side) with the doctor. When we got home from the visit, my mother's mother would use their home sign system to relay the information to my mother, or my father's mother or sister would speak in Hokkien with exaggerated lip movements to my father. As we grow older, this task of brokering partly fell on my OHCODA sister if neither my grandmothers nor my aunt were available to accompany the deaf members on visits to the clinics/hospitals. Again, she used either Hokkien and Taglish or just Taglish depending on the language use of the doctors/nurses.

The language brokering that occur in these situations raises important questions about how CODAs of color make use of their multilingual and multicultural resources to support deaf parents who may be "differently positioned in society" in terms of "hierarchy, status, and power relation" (Orellana 2009 in Phoenix and Orellana 2021) because of their disability. This system of relaying information violated conventionalized power dynamics with regard to parenting and healthcare decisions about their children; my parents imported less relevance in real-time medical decision-making with regard to their own children. They had little to no agency during the appointments and were only learning what was discussed after the appointment. This being the Philippines in the 1980s to early 2000s when there was little to no awareness outside of local deaf organizations about the importance of self-advocacy for deaf Filipinos in terms of accommodation or accessibility, none of us, much less the medical professionals, saw this informal interpreting and relaying of information after the appointment as problematic nor did anyone try to remedy it.

6. Societal Translanguaging

As we can surmise from the social and medical contexts where translanguaging occurs, there has been and is still a need for additional communication support when hearing people that are not family are involved. The system for assistance for persons with disabilities (PWDs) in the Philippines is still not adequate enough to encourage autonomy/agency for deaf Filipinos and consequently, many deaf Filipinos in the Philippines are having a difficult time gaining employment and are experiencing financial vulnerability and instability (Cruz and Calimpusan 2018). Societal perception of deaf Filipinos is rather negative and deafness has been and still is largely seen as a source of shame, karma for past life's actions, and an unfortunate but unavoidable event (Akamatsu and Cole 2003). Deaf Filipinos are regarded as "blemishes on the family, [...] a curse of God, [...] *desgraciadas*" (Berger 1969). The urban and rural Filipino community's view of the deaf identity are encapsulated in the two Tagalog words for "deaf"—*pipi* and *bingi*. Both words have undercurrents of derogatory notions regarding the worth or value of deaf people with *pipi* being slightly more demeaning as it denotes "deaf and dumb." The general societal tendency to equate the ability to speak with intelligence exacerbates this negative view of deaf people who do not have speaking privilege. In contrast to the U.S. Deaf communities where deaf families, especially multigenerational ones, are celebrated and seen as elite and experts in the fields of Deaf Education and Deaf Studies, having deaf families in the Philippines is regarded as catastrophic. This negative view of the deaf identity in the Philippines may have influenced the education system set up for deaf students. Most deaf schools in the

country are run by hearing leaders who have decided which communication philosophy best fits the education of the deaf. However, literature specifically on this topic tends to be concentrated within the Special Education field where deaf individuals are generally called “hearing impaired” (Undalok 2015; Langga et al. 2021). Such articles constantly make references to educational approaches rooted in the Global North/Western perspective, therefore it is rather difficult to use them as research bases upon which to analyze the experiences of deaf Filipinos.

In recent times, societal regard of deaf people in the Philippines has become slightly more favorable, owing to exposure to U.S. media on deaf lives and increasing awareness of U.S. deaf culture, literature, and the arts. The beginnings of the notions of deaf pride, positive self-identity, and advocacy for FSL are germinating and growing in the deaf communities in the Philippines in recent years. However, the prevailing attitude towards deaf individuals remains firmly rooted in hearing saviourism.

This disparaging view of deaf individuals and deaf families has influenced my father’s, my deaf sister’s, and my own decision to use speech whenever possible when out interacting with non-signers in society and not at home. It even compelled me to learn more languages such as Nihongo (Japanese language) and Nihonshuwa (Japanese Sign Language), the desire of which is borne not only by my idolization of Japanese *aidoru gurūpu* (romanization of the Japanese term for “idol group”) and their songs, but my need for some sort of vindication and redemption for me and my deaf family. Interwoven into our motivations to use speech and foreign languages is our unconscious desire to subscribe to the prevailing raciolinguistic ideologies. We express this by attempting to avoid the stigma attached to using our communities’ languages (FSL and Tagalog) that have “less social currency” in certain situations where the use of languages that are considered prestigious would be more socially advantageous. This compulsion to avoid linguistic stigma seems to be rather common among multilingual populations in colonized countries (Woolard and Schieffelin 1994; Hill 2012). Our father is late-deafened and so can continue to use Hokkien, English, and Tagalog or a code-mixture thereof with hearing family members, in-laws, friends, and strangers. My deaf sister speaks mostly in English with a smattering of Tagalog. I use Taglish. Our mother has never been able to speak so she relies on us or other hearing members of the family during interactions with non-signers. Our varying communicative abilities, in turn, influenced our educational placements in deaf, oral, and private schools.

7. Educational Translanguaging

Accommodations for deaf students mainstreamed in hearing private and public schools were practically nonexistent in the 1980s and 1990s when I was elementary and high-school age. Our mother was born deaf and became fluent in FSL so she was brought to the Philippine School for the Deaf where she attended from Kindergarten until her graduation from high school. Our father was late-deafened and attended a Chinese immersion school in Manila Chinatown. Our parents needed to consider which schools we would be able to survive in given our differing hearing statuses and translanguaging capabilities. My parents sent me to a private all-girls Catholic school where I went from Kindergarten to senior year of high school because I was able to use English and Tagalog, the two languages required for entrance into most schools located in and around the Manila metropolitan area. My OHCODA sister was able to use Tagalog, English, and a couple of Chinese languages (Hokkien and Mandarin) so she was admitted to the same Chinese immersion school our father had attended. My deaf sister and I were not placed in this Chinese immersion school because our parents and relatives thought it might be impossible for us to learn the six tones in Hokkien. My deaf sister who can use English and FSL fluently, but not Tagalog, was initially placed in the now-defunct Southeast Asian Institute for the Deaf which employs the Total Communication approach. She transferred to the Philippine Institute for the Deaf, the first oral school in the Philippines, until 6th grade, then to the Clarke School for the Deaf in Massachusetts for two years, and finally to Brent International School in

Manila which uses only English as the medium of instruction. Her level of English proficiency is higher than that of her Tagalog and as a deaf person, it was seen as a strategic and beneficial move to have her attend a school in the language in which she is stronger.

My sisters and I have educational experiences that vastly differ from each other. The impact of these differences is most evident in the careers we are now working in, our social circles, and our choice of life partners. Other than our upbringing at home, our educational experiences and the languaging we became used to at schools further influenced the comfort level and ease with certain languages for each of us.

I would like to note that English proficiency is seen as vital in deaf Filipinos' ability to "succeed" in and out of school as can be observed from my experience and that of my deaf sister in navigating the educational systems in both the Philippines and the U.S. Because of the effects of U.S. colonization and imperialism (Bresnahan 1978), deaf Filipinos are encouraged to learn English in order to gain upward mobility. We have been colonized to believe that English is a language of prestige and opportunity. Consequently, many deaf Filipinos are sent to the United States by or with their families, schools, or parishes for "better" education. This further reflects a preference towards English, and by extension, ASL, though they are not on an equal level in the linguistic hierarchy in the current U.S. deaf education system. ASL might fall higher on a hierarchy of acceptance than FSL, but certainly not on the same level as English (with the exception of some U.S. deaf communities) among U.S. educators and administrators.

Naturally, this impacts how local deaf Filipinos see themselves and their languaging; the raciolinguistic ideologies at play dictate that those who have more ASL vocabulary in their FSL (especially those who have had their education in the U.S. before returning to the motherland) are perceived as being superior among many members of the deaf Filipino community (and hearing Filipino signers) than those who can only use FSL. They are also rather proud that they can use English almost exclusively when speaking (if they have speaking proficiency) and writing, though there is a growing number of deaf Filipinos who now wish they knew their families' home languages so they can better communicate with and understand them.

8. Progress in Support for FSL and Filipino Deaf Community

Despite this known widespread preference for English and ASL, there have been efforts made by deaf and hearing Filipino scholars and community leaders in deaf organizations such as the Philippine Federation of the Deaf. One such effort led to the passing of the Republic Act No. 11106 (RA 11106), the declaration of "Filipino Sign Language as the National Sign Language Of The Filipino Deaf And The Official Sign Language Of Government In All Transactions Involving The Deaf, And Mandating Its Use In Schools, Broadcast Media, And Workplaces" (National Council on Disability Affairs 2018; Source: <https://www.ncda.gov.ph/disability-laws/republic-acts/ra-11106/> accessed on 8 April 2022). This act allows for the promotion and assurance of FSL use in school, at work, and in media and for deaf Filipinos to exercise their right to express in FSL in the aforementioned contexts. Individual scholars, particularly Dr. Liza Martinez who graduated from Gallaudet University, have spearheaded and promulgated research into FSL with efforts to differentiate it from ASL (Martinez 2012). The effects of these strides in research are most evident in ongoing work of the deaf and hard of hearing program at the De La Salle—College of Saint Benilde in Manila. Efforts have been made by Dr. Raphael Domingo, with the help of the Linguistics Department at Gallaudet University, to set up an FSL database (R. Domingo, personal communication, September 2021). Domingo is also involved in the building of the curriculum for the Benilde Deaf School. The school was established to help promote the use of FSL in the education of deaf Filipinos; though since the Philippines is a multilingual country, decisions are still being made regarding how Tagalog, English, and FSL can be equally and equitably used as mediums of instruction in a way that would benefit the students.

9. Raciolinguistics in Translingualism in U.S Deaf Classrooms and Communities

Meanwhile, deaf Filipinos/Filipinx Americans, regardless of whether they are immigrants, children of immigrants, or U.S.-born, are experiencing the ramifications of raciolinguistic ideologies in U.S. deaf classrooms and communities. Regardless of the fact that English is one of their first languages, and perhaps English and ASL are the only languages most of them know and use fluently, they are racialized and taught to believe either their English or ASL proficiency—or both—are less than ideal. If translanguaging is used as a pedagogical approach, where teachers can decide which multiple languages to draw upon and use in specific contexts in their linguistically diverse classrooms (Ticheloven et al. 2019; Wagner 2021), this approach seems beneficial only for deaf Filipinos/Filipinx Americans who are multilingual. Multilingual students can uniquely leverage their proficiencies in their home language/s in the classroom provided teachers make an effort to incorporate them and not prioritize their own language preferences. But, what of those deaf Filipino students who have undergone experiences of language deprivation? Going beyond the classroom, what about those who are either multilingual and practicing translingualism or who have had experiences of language deprivation? They must learn to navigate signing communities in the United States that subscribe to DEAF-SAME and are not widely tolerant of deaf individuals who are not very well-versed in ASL. DEAF-SAME, as delineated by Robinson (2018), is an emphasis on sameness based on being deaf, a “false sense of deaf universalism.” This is a misguided understanding that just because one is deaf, one has similar linguistic abilities, inclinations, life experiences, et cetera, as others who are also deaf regardless of social differentiation, i.e., race, ethnicity, gender, age, class, or nationality. Any differences between two deaf individuals from different racial backgrounds, and discussions of intersectional identities vis a vis DEAF-SAME, are considered irrelevant and unimportant or “too negative and critical” (Ruiz-Williams et al. 2015, p. 264). This is much to the detriment of the racialized deaf individual for whom their intersectional identities largely define how they navigate various milieus. This intolerance of diverse experiences is not uniquely targeted towards deaf Filipinos/Filipinx Americans but also illustrates the broader languaging experiences of immigrant deaf students of color from other countries, especially nations where neither English nor ASL is one of the dominant languages.

When I first moved to the U.S. eight years ago (as of the time of this writing), I remember having a rather difficult time mingling with deaf people here. I acquired ASL through watching YouTube videos and conversing with my partner. At the time, my beginner ASL was not adequate enough to carry on full conversations without me interjecting FSL and home signs after every three ASL signs or so. In my experience, my ability to navigate between languages does not help me; I perceive that White or U.S.-born/raised individuals often see my language use as inferior. I attribute this to language attitude and adherence to raciolinguistic ideologies where my languaging does not seem to measure up to the standardized use of the language regardless of whether it actually does or even exceeds it. In this instance, my not meeting White or U.S.-born/raised individuals’ expectations of DEAF-SAME leads them to unconsciously categorize me as a deaf person whose linguistic abilities do not qualify me as full-fledged deaf. My experiences of translanguaging seem to further emphasize the “foreignness” and “wrongness” of my ASL utterances. Furthermore, my translanguaging inexplicably convinces some that I do not know English and that I may not be intelligent. I argue that the DEAF-SAME stance is borne of raciolinguistic ideologies which, simply put, pertain to power imbalances caused by differences in race and language in any given situation. From wide readings of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education literature and from personal experiences, this DEAF-SAME mentality seems to be the attitude and viewpoint currently held by certain White Deaf people and White hearing people in leadership positions who want to “save” the deaf communities. Additionally, such individuals represent the dominant voice in Deaf scholarship and in the Deaf Education system. Consequently, there are few books and educational research articles that show the many different ways that being deaf could look, the racialized face of the deaf, the “Other”

deaf, and how these deaf people who differ from the norm function in normalized Deaf educational settings, especially with regard to languaging.

My own experience illustrates how the perceived legitimacy of translanguaging depends on the race of the individual doing the translanguaging. I posit that translanguaging, as a linguistic practice, is also deeply embedded in discourses on and about race. Hill (2012) observed that language attitudes in the deaf communities in the U.S. are not only based on judgment regarding age of ASL acquisition and signing type (ASL, Pidgin Signed English, Signed Exact English, etc.) but also on the race of the signer. It is not just about being deaf but also about being racialized. Raciolinguistics scholars urge us to “analyze language and race together rather than as discrete and unconnected social processes and to employ the diverse methods of linguistics to raise critical questions about the relations between language, race, and power” (Alim et al. 2016). Because race is always performed in conjunction with other axes of social differentiation (disability and immigrant status, in this case), it would behoove us to take a more intentionally intersectional (as conceptualized by Crenshaw 1989) stance on how a deaf Filipinos/Filipinx American’s multiple marginalized identities contribute to their experience in the U.S. deaf education system. Garcia-Fernandez (2020) has shown how intersectionality similarly characterizes the lives of deafblind, deafdisabled, deaf, and hard-of-hearing Latinx children and how the autoethnographic method helps bring her intersectional identities into light and validates her experiences. Crump (2014) in her dissertation on critical language and race theory (LangCrit) argues that linguistic identities intersect with racial(ized) identities and this intersection propagates meaning in how language is used to signify (non)belongingness and to affect language development. It “highlights the social construction of language and identity” (p. 58) and affects the ways language use shapes possibilities for individuals.

10. Translanguaging as a Means to Connect with the Home Language

This framing brings us to question what it means to be deaf Filipinos/Filipinx Americans who can fluently use English and/or ASL but not the spoken and signed languages of their motherland. In this case, learning the latter and using translanguaging as a tool to help them in their heritage language learning is crucial to their sense of belongingness to their culture and connection to their roots. Several deaf Filipinos I know, especially those who were born in the U.S. or have grown up here, are starting to wish they were more proficient in their families’ home languages primarily for two reasons: they would like to reconnect with their cultures, and to be able to communicate with their families; most of them are born to hearing families and their communication with each other is rather limited. However, the desire for assimilation and acculturation to U.S. American society has led their hearing families to make the decision not to teach their children their home languages. This is such a common narrative that belongs not only to the deaf Filipinos but also to transracial and transnational adoptees and to hearing children of immigrants and refugees of color. This reflects a general growing trend towards people returning to their roots, more specifically towards heritage language learning (Gasca Jiménez and Adrada-Rafael 2021).

11. Manifestations and Ramifications of Raciolinguistic Ideologies in Deaf Education

Finally, I look to language education in the U.S. Deaf education system to consider possibilities for deaf Filipinos/Filipinx Americans to practice translanguaging. Current trends in Deaf education reveal a need to generate greater awareness of how language ideologies, specifically raciolinguistic ideologies, and the insidious effects of the DEAF-SAME mentality affect the language education and potential for translanguaging of deaf Filipinos/Filipinx Americans. Teaching English and, to a similar extent, ASL, to these particular students is a political act, especially seeing as for most of them, learning their heritage language may not be an option. These students are learning only English and ASL. How then can a bilingual or dual language curriculum in a deaf program be employed to support such individuals who were born and raised here in the U.S. who may want to

connect with their home languages? Additionally, we consider previous research that concluded that teachers of the deaf, by their words and actions, subscribe to the dominance of Deaf White perspective in Deaf Education and regard Deaf White elite as the “first models of ASL and informants on Deaf Culture” (Fernandes and Myers 2010). We have to consider the consequences that this kind of DEAF-SAME thinking may engender, which inevitably sets up deaf Filipinos/Filipinx American students for failure in academia. This kind of thinking seems to be prevalent among teachers of the deaf and I think it is worth exploring the fallacy of the DEAF-SAME mentality and its harmful effects on the ways deaf Filipinos/Filipinx Americans are being educated. When we group deaf Filipinos/Filipinx Americans and other deaf students of color and White deaf students together, this has repercussions for their lives in the larger communities after they leave school. What has been done for decades in U.S. Deaf Education, either in deaf schools or for mainstreamed deaf students, is not fully applicable to this particular student population with its unique language learning needs. With this in mind, it would behoove stakeholders and everyone who works with them to unpack the layers of complexity that comprise the linguistic experiences of deaf Filipinos/Filipinx Americans and not just use deafness as a pivot upon which any and all other interventions revolve.

12. Conclusions

I began this paper with a narrative unfolding of my own and my family members’ languaging experiences in Manila, Philippines. I described the language profiles of each member of my family and how translanguaging is practiced in various contexts: interactions within the immediate and extended families, interactions with people inside and outside our communities, doctors’ offices, clinics, and hospitals, Filipino society at large, and in schools. And then, I reported on the strides made towards FSL research and application towards its formal usage by deaf Filipinos, especially in educational settings. Finally, I shed light on another sector of the deaf Filipino community, specifically deaf Filipinos/Filipinx Americans, and their experiences of raciolinguistic ideologies in the U.S. deaf education system.

The transition from my personal familial life to the broader milieu of the U.S. Deaf education reflects a shift from how my own translanguaging experiences were shaped by the first part of my life that I lived in the Philippines and the second part of my life that I have lived in the U.S. This autoethnography describes the experiences of one individual and one family; but it is evident that the political, educational, and societal factors influencing me likely also play out among many others. Everyone has their own experience, but there are larger external pressures that shape the way immigrant deaf students of color like myself navigate life in our home countries and here in the U.S. I hope to have adequately illustrated how these external pressures governed by language attitudes, language ideologies, and raciolinguistic ideologies are inextricably intertwined with the aspirations and practices of translanguaging.

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Note

¹ Apparently, CODAs hold this designation from when they are born until when they are 18 years old.

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