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A Digital-Decolonial Approach to Writing Pedagogy

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Abstract: Decolonizing pedagogy is an important mission that takes purposeful action and effort. Here, I demonstrate why decolonizing pedagogies are difficult to implement in writing classes, especially in digital spaces. Even so, I argue in this article that a digital-decolonial pedagogy requires an active focus on digital rhetorics and pedagogy, intersectionality, and decoloniality, and this approach works toward social justice as it is more inclusive for students who have historically been underrepresented in the classroom and curricula. Through the systematic review of decolonization and digital rhetoric scholarship, the findings discuss applications of this digital-decolonial approach to technical writing pedagogy.

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As technologies continue to advance within technical communication, much of today's writing is done on smart devices and computers for an audience who interacts with texts via digital platforms. Analyzing and producing in digital spaces is especially prevalent in the writing classroom as the discipline has become more and more accepting of the digital sphere (Journet et al., 2012; Hawisher et al., 1996; Marlow & Purdy, 2021; Yancey, 2004). With this increased focus on digital spaces and rhetoric in the writing classroom, the issue of providing an equitable and inclusive learning environment for students is also especially important to consider (Hawisher & Selfe, 1991; Walker, 2001). At the same time, technical writing and professional communication classes, specifically, have been grappling with these same challenges of equitable and inclusive teaching environments and preparing students for professional careers and research, often employing digital technologies (Agboka, 2018, 2021; Gonzalez et al., 2020; Haas & Eble, 2018; Walton et al., 2019). Many classrooms do take up this commitment to inclusivity. But while technology is often thought of as providing value in helping further these missions, it is important to remember that technology is not neutral.

Given this bias of digital spaces, researchers Rhodes (2005), Tekobbe (2013), and Blair (2018), etc. have demonstrated that digital platforms are designed primarily by white men with Western, white men as their imagined audience. Therefore, it is commonplace for digital structures and systems to overlook and erase users who do not have that positionality. This exclusion, of course, includes a wide range of people, like women, African Americans, Latinx, people with disabilities, etc. However, decolonization theory, as I will further address and define below, means decentering the white, settler colonial narrative to make space for specifically Indigenous identities as well as other historically underrepresented identities and voices. While there have been studies about many of these othered identities in relation to digital structures (Banks, 2006; Noble & Tynes, 2016), comparatively little has been written about digital forms of writing in relation to Indigenous identity and decoloniality (Haas, 2007, 2015; Tekobbe, 2019, 2024). Emphasizing a decolonial approach to digital platforms in the technical writing classroom teaches students to deconstruct the structures and systems within this space that exclude and devalue othered subjectivities outside of the Western, white, male identity. Therefore, I argue that while digital pedagogies can miss the opportunity to decolonize these digital spaces before including and teaching them in the writing classroom, this move is essential. Examining the always non-neutral digital spaces used in the writing classroom setting and teaching decolonial practice as opposing typical Western colonial systems and structures ultimately work towards a digital-decolonial approach to pedagogy.

Positionality Statement

In the same spirit of relationality and community that is so integral to Indigenous knowledge-making and decolonial practice, it's important for me to disclose that I identify as and write from the perspective of a white, middle-class woman, which allows me to succeed at the expense and oppression of underrepresented peoples and communities. As Indigenous scholar Tekobbe (2024) states in her recent book, "Indigenous Practice, as well as feminist practice, is to identify and know your positionality" (p. 67). As a researcher and writer in a privileged academic system, I recognize that there is no such thing as neutral research. Part of my process for inclusive research includes self-examination and personal reflection, listening to and privileging

Indigenous scholars through citational justice, and writing for Indigenous peoples and not about them as subjects to be studied.

Literature Review

To work toward this digital-decolonial approach in the technical writing classroom, it is important to specifically look at a few theories in relation to digital spaces and technologies to build a framework for this pedagogy. I argue here that connecting the issue of digital pedagogy to technical writing classrooms specifically requires an active focus on digital rhetorics and pedagogy, intersectionality, and decolonization within the digital sphere, and this approach works toward social justice in providing a more inclusive learning environment for students who are often left behind and outside of representation in the classroom and curricula. I further assert that these ideas connect in that learning each theory and including it in teaching practice are the first steps to a decolonizing pedagogy for the digital age. Below, I give a brief overview of each term while also connecting it to the pedagogical approach I'm beginning to outline here.

Digital Rhetoric and Pedagogy

The term *digital rhetoric* itself is made up of many complicated pieces, including many diverging digital spaces, everyday communications and interactions, and rhetorical practices. Eyman (2015) provides an overview of digital rhetoric by defining rhetoric itself, stating, "rhetoric is synonymous with meaning, for meaning is in use and context, not words themselves. Knowledge and belief are products of persuasion, which seeks to make the arguable seem natural, to turn positions into premises – and it is rhetoric's responsibility to reveal these ideological operations" (p. 16). While this is not the only nor the most traditional way to think about rhetoric, this definition is appealing because it leaves open the modality of rhetorical power while also highlighting the meaning-making aspect of rhetoric, a key part of creating digital rhetoric. Rhetorical practices are consistently used in communication and writing classrooms when teaching critical thinking and making skills to urge students to consider the implications of the way they communicate. Digital rhetoric, then, emphasizes analysis and production of meaning within digital spaces and is perhaps most simply defined as "the application of rhetorical theory (as analytic method or heuristic for production) to digital texts and performances" (Eyman, 2015, p. 44).

Haas (2012) takes a different approach here as she relates technology to rhetorical practice with a focus on decolonial teaching practice in both composition and technical communication classrooms. Her article specifically highlights how technical communication has historically privileged Eurocentric technologies and rhetorics while continually marginalizing Indigenous contributions. Haas as an indigenous researcher, then, advocates for a decolonial approach to digital rhetoric, which involves critically analyzing the power structures that shape digital spaces and incorporating diverse cultural perspectives. She argues that rhetoric can both prescribe and upend the prescribed notions of race and technology thereby making room for more classroom discussions in these areas. She states,

> In essence, for decolonial ideologies to emerge, new rhetorics must be spoken, written, or otherwise delivered into existence. Even in the most

> progressive spaces and places, the colonial rhetorical detritus of racism and ethnocentrism remains, and if these worldviews and rhetorics go unchallenged, they will continue to influence who and what we think of when we consider issues of race and technological literacy and expertise. (Haas, 2012, p. 287)

As Haas reminds us here, rhetoric has the power to provoke social change, and I argue that an emphasis on digital rhetoric in the context outlined by Haas is the approach that should be taken to work toward decolonizing and challenging digital spaces in the classroom. Using these definitions provided by Eyman (2015) and Haas (2012), I consider digital rhetoric to be the practice of analyzing and creating digital spaces, which can take many different forms, while applying rhetorical theory to meaningfully convey information. As Haas notes, bringing the concept of digital rhetoric into the technical writing classroom ultimately allows students to discuss, create, and use digital rhetoric to analyze how power operates through language, imagery, algorithms, and user interfaces which helps build toward a digital-decolonial pedagogy. Using digital rhetoric in the classroom, students can critique the biases in digital tools, social media algorithms, and online discourse (e.g., who is heard, who is erased, and how identities are represented), highlight how colonial histories persist in digital design, and find examples of resistance in digital spaces, such as hashtag activism (e.g., #BlackLivesMatter, #NoDAPL, etc.).

I argue then, that digital rhetoric should necessarily always be evolving in the communication and writing classroom – that is, we should be using it pedagogically – as we teach students to use and subvert technologies to challenge these dominant structures. As I will discuss, we see digital rhetoric emerging through writing technologies, multimodality, digital texts, digital literacy, and analyzing or creating social media communities. While we must teach students about these technologies, and teaching digital rhetoric gives us a way to do that, we must also teach them to be critical thinkers and consider the colonial power structures and bias towards different positionalities at play in these spaces.

Intersectionality

When incorporating digital spaces and teaching digital rhetoric in relation to a digital-decolonial pedagogy by considering colonial power structures, one must also work toward an "adoption of an intersectional way of thinking about the problem of sameness and difference and its relation to power" since these spaces are non-neutral and reflect the uneven power structure of society (Cho et al., 2013, p. 795). The term *intersectionality* is borrowed from Black feminist theory and was first coined by Crenshaw (1998), who defines it most clearly as "a metaphor for understanding the ways that multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound themselves and create obstacles that often are not understood among conventional ways of thinking" (p. 149). While Crenshaw (1991) used this definition to consider the different ways that race and gender interact to shape Black women's experiences, intersectionality has expanded significantly from this early metaphor to "a critical social theory in the making" with many different dimensions, core constructs, guiding premises, and applications (Collins, 2019, p. 81). As it is useful in this context, I use intersectionality as a lens through which to analyze social inequalities caused by intersecting power relations that impact both individual and group experiences. Adopting this lens is imperative to building a digital-decolonial pedagogy that

considers these inequalities and power relationships specifically in digital contexts and works to even the playing field at the student level. Noble and Tynes compiled some of the most recent works of scholars who "explicitly [trace] and [intervene] in the types of uneven power relations that exist in technological spaces" (2016, p. 6). The authors explore an intersectional approach to social media platforms which they call *social networking spaces* (SNS). This work with SNS specifically applies to a digital-decolonial pedagogy because social media platforms are increasingly popular; teachers have more potential to engage students through these platforms and emphasize the community and relationality aspects of these spaces along with their great potential for social justice.

Decolonization

Previous research asserts some digital pedagogy works toward inclusivity by focusing on intersections between accessibility, embodiment, identity, etc. (Alalem, 2023; Byrd, 2020; Yergeau et al., 2013); however, even some of these digital pedagogies can miss the opportunity to decolonize digital spaces before including them and teaching them in the writing classroom. I argue that this move is essential as it is the combination of examining non-neutral digital spaces in the writing classroom setting and teaching decolonial practice as opposing typical Western, colonial systems and structures that works towards a digital-decolonial approach to pedagogy.

Because colonization and the white settler narrative remain prevalent in the United States (Tuck & Yang, 2012), the issue of colonization is extremely widespread, and it impacts people and power dynamics both globally and individually. Haas (2015) defines *decolonial theory as:*

> An epistemological and ontological approach to examining (1) how we have individually and collectively been affected by and complicit in the legacy of colonialism; (2) how these effects and complicities of historical and contemporary colonialism influence research and educational institutions, theories, methodologies, methods, and scholarship; and (3) how the effects and complicities of colonialism play out in our everyday embodied practices (pp. 190-191)

In taking up this definition, a decolonial pedagogical approach, then, works to decenter the white, settler colonial narrative and the structures this narrative has put in place to make space for Indigenous and historically underrepresented identities and voices.

Bridging these theories of digital rhetoric, intersectionality, and decolonization by teaching them together to our students ultimately forms the framework that I see working toward a digital decolonial pedagogy in the technical writing classroom. Digital rhetoric and pedagogy, first, provide students with the tools to critically analyze how power operates through digital tools and platforms, revealing the colonial and exclusionary narratives often embedded within digital spaces. Intersectionality, then, expands this analysis by highlighting how overlapping systems of oppression – such as racism, sexism, and ableism – shape access, participation, and representation in digital contexts to ensure that diverse voices and experiences are centered. Finally, decolonization challenges the dominance of Western epistemologies by reimagining digital spaces and pedagogical practices to include Indigenous and non-Western knowledge. Together, these theories foster a pedagogy that not only equips students with the skills to critique

and navigate digital spaces but also empowers them to create inclusive, transformative content that challenges systemic inequities. In what follows, I will outline what teaching these theories in tandem looks like and demonstrate a few ways to begin enacting this pedagogy.

Core Tenets for a Digital Decolonial Pedagogy

Informed by this framework, a digital-decolonial pedagogy, in its commitment to challenging established Western hierarchies in digital spaces, will uphold the following tenets:

1. Teach digital rhetorics and technology as non-neutral
2. Foster intersectionality, relationality, and community
3. Promote Indigenous knowledges and methods towards activism and social justice
4. Privilege a kitchen-table approach that values students' languages and multilingualism

In the following discussion, I provide practical pedagogical applications for combining both digital and decolonial approaches to teaching writing and communication along with a discussion of some practical methods for applying digital spaces to the classroom from a position of my own teaching experience. I will further demonstrate what this digital-decolonial approach will look like by detailing these four core tenets and the scholarship behind them throughout the approach I outline here.

Discussion

Tenet 1: Teach digital rhetorics and technology as non-neutral

The growth of digital rhetoric in writing studies and technical communication is mostly due to the continuing advancement of digital spaces in society as new technology continues to emerge. Because analyzing and creating digital rhetoric is so applicable to everyday life, the concept has a place in the writing classroom and can provide a way for instructors to teach foundational digital concepts for students to engage with these spaces. Giving students a level of preparedness with technology is especially relevant in today’s educational contexts as the Covid-19 pandemic and the turn to remote learning has made digital spaces even more prevalent in the classroom. Online interaction has become an essential part of our loves in personal, educational, and professional contexts. This continued digital emphasis makes these spaces and platforms a great site for discussion and analysis of how these spaces often replicate colonial systems of privilege and exclusion seen in physical spaces as well.

In my writing classroom, we talk about how society tends to think about technology and the constraints and affordances it gives us in various ways. Most recently, I have had the opportunity to teach about emerging technologies, how they work(ed), and their place in the English classroom. However, as we discuss these, I find that it is especially necessary to emphasize to students the non-neutrality of these devices. Many students have never considered the bias involved in these spaces, despite using them every day. Beginning with this conversation gives students a starting place and a framework to begin to critique digital structures, and it leaves room for them to eventually develop alternative, more inclusive approaches as they critically investigate the impact of this bias on individuals and society. This is only one example, but this line of reasoning shows why coupling the digital and decolonial approach to pedagogy is so necessary in our present technology-forward society.

It is important to note, as we bring digital spaces into the writing classroom, that teachers must educate students on digital spaces by privileging digital literacies. Teaching digital literacies is a major issue not only in the classroom but also in society as technology evolves and expands in response to global and institutional contexts, such as the Covid-19 pandemic. This relationship between education and societal expectations for digital literacies is important to remember when taking a digital approach in the classroom; educators need to teach students the digital concepts they will need not only in the classroom but also as citizens beyond the academy.

The concept of digital literacies has changed as technology has evolved and expanded. Some recent work by Byrd (2020) takes a favorable stance on digital literacies, citing a gap between digital education and the value of technology in the workplace. He explains that digital literacies are an issue for many adults who did not grow up with technology and "especially for low-income and racially marginalized adults, as they must navigate systemic racism that prevents their accessing new literacy that may promote their social advancement or their own survival" (Byrd, 2020, p. 427). Byrd addresses K-12 education specifically where students are often set up to fail because current standards for digital literacies in the classroom do not scaffold well into the job market. He writes: "Educational institutions may promote an approach to learning digital technology that reduces technologies to mere communication devices that work similarly over time rather than as objects that evolve and emerge constantly and thus need to be learned and relearned over a lifetime" (Byrd, 2020, p. 435). While this study occurred in the secondary school setting, it still reinforces the idea of teaching different technologies across all different disciplines to help students understand emerging technologies. This mission remains central to a decolonized pedagogy as we teach students about emerging technologies and the constructs and systems that surround them as well.

I often use Baron (1999) to teach technology in my writing classroom which focuses on not only writing as a technology itself, but also discusses how technologies all go through a similar process of accessibility, where they are tested by an elite few, function, where they are spread to the masses and changed by collective users need for them, and eventually authentication, where they are accepted in a final form by society. Teaching students about this pattern gets them interested and shows them that while emergent technologies do become more complicated and intricate, technology itself is not necessarily new. In addition, since the Baron's work is a bit dated, it leaves room for discussion of technologies that have since emerged and that are still emerging. This piece also supports students in beginning to think about who is privileged in technology production and who is not. As the foundation is laid in my classroom, we go on to have more and more complicated conversations about the bias in these technologies, and the way they have influenced communication and the writing process. For instance, at the end of the semester, we discuss Noble's (2018) work on the oppressive racial and stereotypical bias in algorithms. Having students analyze how Google algorithms privilege standardized language and can bring up results that are harmful representations of minority groups like Indigenous people is work that can only be done after laying the critical foundation of what technology is and how different forms fit into our society. This allows students to more critically interrogate technological tools and the way they construct the output provided to users in many cases. Teaching this from an intersectional standpoint, specifically, supports conversations that analyze and discuss how digital communication can impact our lives differently, depending on our

positionalities, and having students consider these biases is ultimately the first step to having students consider how they can subvert them in and beyond the classroom.

In short, bringing technology into the classroom and teaching technology from a standpoint of the digital being rhetorical with experiences tied to identity is imperative to advantage students who are living and learning in the digital age. It is ethical to teach students digital spaces not only to help them learn in the classroom but also to function in a technology-forward society. Educators must also remember these proficiencies are not only a classroom issue, but a societal one that will impact students in their everyday lives. These contexts make teaching digital literacies an ethical obligation before forcing digital spaces on students in the communication and writing classroom and then society as a whole.

In addition to teaching about and how to use technology, I see multimodality as another method that helps me engage with a digital-decolonial approach to pedagogy. Allowing students to both read and compose multimodally allows them to engage with their ideas in different ways including the modes of visual, aural, gestural, and spatial. While multimodal does not always mean digital, digital spaces allow students to engage with these different communication modes and create digital rhetoric. Having students engage with texts and create multimodally ultimately benefits both student and teacher because it allows for the relaying of information in many ways and helps both parties grasp concepts that are not as easily understood in traditional contexts. Additionally, because multimodality itself includes a variety of ways to communicate information, it naturally allows for and encourages a diversity in the types of student projects that it allows into the writing classroom, creating more space for alternative discourse.

Bringing multimodality into the classroom is not new, but it should still be done as a conscious choice. In my classroom, I use multimodal assignments intentionally by having students engage with the concept of genre and applying it to at least one project for the semester. When I teach genre, I teach my students that we must think critically about both the communication medium and mode that we are using to communicate their message, whatever form of communication they are using. This not only allows students to express their identities, their cultures, and themselves in whichever communicative form works best for them, but it also allows for diversity in the forms of knowledge being produced. Traditional educational systems and pedagogy have often prioritized alphabetic literacy, reflecting colonial histories that devalue oral, visual, or performative forms of knowledge. However, multimodal pedagogy makes a place for these alternative knowledges. Wysocki et al. (2019) echo these sentiments of purpose in enacting this type of pedagogy and the multimodal manifesto they write specifically speaks to teachers, arguing that "a multimodal pedagogy is not just additive; rather, it is a stance, an orientation, and a privileging of the many ways of making and receiving meaning" (p. 21). In having students multimodally compose in the classroom, we can use multimodality as another method to begin incorporating digital rhetoric and technology into the classroom and deconstructing the ideas that students have about technology being neutral and equalizing.

Tenet 2: Foster intersectionality, relationality, and community

Teaching through an intersectional lens about differing experiences based on positionality is imperative in a digital-decolonial pedagogy, and one way that I do this is to teach students about

different online communities and the space that is being made for more intersectional voices in these platforms. Most students are already extremely familiar with the online spaces of SNS like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, making them ideal platforms for bringing technology and a diverse range of digital spaces into the writing classroom. I often use SNS pedagogically by having students engage with them for assignments, and I also show certain spaces as examples of multimodal composition when I want students to create in this real-world form. Additionally, SNS are also extremely relevant to social justice missions and activism because of their organizing potential, ability to widely spread information, and the potential to amplify individual experiences and voices. Situating the relevance of these already well-known platforms to activism, community, and relationality provides students an opportunity to have them consider not only the political nature of SNS but also show examples of resistance and social justice movements in digital spaces. Taking an intersectional approach is imperative, and although there are many different platforms that are considered social media, I focus mostly on Twitter (now known as X) and Facebook here.

Work done by Tynes et al. (2016) provides a good example of how to show and teach the intersectionality of SNS. The authors extensively discuss the use of hashtag activism on Twitter, specifically #BlackLivesMatter and other hashtags involved with this movement, to look at race and intersectionality in practice in online spaces. Through their analysis, Tynes et al. find that the setup of hashtags acts as the visual representation of the movement itself. For example, the use of the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag not only gains momentum for the cause but is also a huge contribution to the movement itself. It also allows for online involvement in protests and calls for social change through these platforms which are widely accessible. Teaching students about social movements and their social media footprint is a great way to have students see the impact of community and relationality in real-life contexts. We talk about the communicative function of hashtags and the rhetorical functions of campaigns like this one so that students can see how these platforms can allow marginalized communities to reclaim and assert their cultural identities. Because a decolonial approach privileges reclaiming cultural narratives and creating space for historically excluded identities to be represented, SNS proves to be a great site to discuss these narratives and can act as community spaces of resistance for students. As Tynes et al. (2016) explain, “Twitter specifically grants access to conversations through hashtags that enable users to express their cultural competency, identification with Black culture, and deep understanding of social problems through a racialized lens” and the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag provides a good example of these conversations (p. 36).

Ultimately, SNS, like X/Twitter, have given people a space to discuss their personal lives and use their own unique voices for social action. This is a revolutionary occurrence. These sites allow for more intersectionality to be expressed through the sheer diversity of individuals’ positionalities and experiences, and conventions like hashtags make it easy to build community around common goals and interests. As Tynes et al. (2016) state, “social media is not the movement [#BlackLivesMatter] itself, but it certainly amplifies and clarifies the work of organizers and offers a means for disrupting the silences and erasures” (p. 37).
While SNS allow for some freedom in identifying ourselves and telling our stories, I recognize “the ways colonialism, racism, white supremacy, and patriarchy complicate building an Indigenous identity [or any other minoritized identity] in digital spaces and on digital platforms” (Tekobbe, 2024, p. 23). However, I believe that studying these spaces openly and with an

intersectional lens opens doors for new ways to use these spaces for relationality, community building, and social action. The term "good relations" is an Indigenous one meaning "knowledge is approached as created within the context of relationships between people, and those relationships are grounded in trust and open-mindedness" or "an indigenous knowledge that all lives are connected – we are related" (Tekobbe, 2024, p. 19, 57). This does mean considering and acknowledging your positionality and the harm caused by your relations in the past for white folks like me. For people with a white identity, the feeling of guilt is often the response to these difficult conversations, and it should be. However, McNeal and Elbow (2017) urge us to "acknowledge this discomfort, but not just feel guilty" (p. 27). He further asserts that facing facts is the key here:

> White privilege is "unearned." Even though we and other whites today didn't steal the land, and even though we're not bad people, we didn't earn the privileges we get through the original theft and our white identity. Guilt doesn't help. . .. Still the land is stolen, and we benefit from it (McNeal & Elbow, 2017 p. 27).

This key concept of privilege is one that I think about and discuss with students when we talk about online communities. Instead of seeing digital tools as neutral or purely instrumental, this relational accountability framework emphasizes mutual responsibility and respect in relationships with humans, non-humans, and the environment. This framework stems from Indigenous epistemologies that prioritize interdependence and balance and lead to community building and allyship. Korn's (2016) research on self-categorization is relevant here, which occurs when a person identifies themselves within a specific group of people (in person or online). With self-categorization comes social identity and relations, which are often affirmed through commonalities in a person's race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, etc. Because of this, she further argues that SNS and Facebook specifically are representative of an increasingly intersectional space. In short, "offline articulations of intersectionality feed into the construction of online communities based on such persistent, cultural markers of race and gender within group discourse in Facebook" (Korn, 2016, p.125). This study shows that the social aspect of life is becoming more and more digitalized, and with social interactions becoming increasingly computer-mediated, the constructs of race, gender, etc. do translate online and these markers do create space for community based on these identities. Teaching students about these spaces, their potential for community and relationality, and their use for social action can prove to be a great starting point for our students to begin to examine intersectional, online community spaces for communication and digital writing through these platforms.

Ultimately, there is more room being made for intersectionality and a diversity of voices to emerge from and into digital spaces (Korn, 2016; Tekobbe, 2024). As teachers, keeping up with the social and political uses of SNS and teaching our students about them along with the concepts of relationality and community is imperative. These sites not only give us examples of the multimodal communication that we want students to privilege but also prioritize discussion of politicization and discrimination that stems from these digital spaces as an extension of the real world. This is of course important for amplifying social justice perspectives and building community for social action.

Tenet 3: Promote Indigenous knowledges and methods towards activism and social justice

The work of decolonization is difficult and extremely purposeful. In addition to the concomitant issues that decide power differentials like the body in which a person exists, personal history, etc., power impacts every aspect of life which makes colonization pervasive and long-lasting. While it is important to recognize this issue of colonization in both digital context and in the writing classroom and pedagogy, one must remember that the overall impact of colonization is much larger and more widespread than in just this small setting. To be clear here, the way that decolonizing is contextualized is important. Tuck and Yang (2012) explain how decolonization can only exist when breaking the order of colonial systems and eventually the colonized world. Tuck and Yang argue that recent educational scholarship has too easily adopted the decolonization narrative as "a metaphor for other things we want to do to improve our societies and schools" (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 1). Using decolonization as a metaphor, Tuck and Yang (2012) explain, "turns decolonization into an empty signifier to be filled by any track towards liberation. In reality, the tracks walk all over land/people in settler contexts" (p. 7). The authors further argue that decolonization must involve and acknowledge land and indigenous people and the wrongs that have been done to both throughout history. This works toward the necessary unsettling nature of decolonialism and its widespread impact on everyone.

In my classroom, I honor Tuck and Yang's argument by talking about land and decolonization explicitly and the connection it has to the space that we occupy, especially the classroom space. One way that this takes place is to have students look at land acknowledgments. Many students I have taught have volunteered that they have never seen these before, and even some have been newly introduced to the concept of decolonization in my classroom. Being at Florida State University, I find it works well to begin with the local site that we inhabit every day and have students reflect and consider what it truly would mean to decolonize the space. I find that while this is only a start, it begins to "give them the tools with which to decolonize the university by showing them the ways in which it attempts to colonize them/us" (García Peña, 2022, p. 54). In short, decolonization is not a term to be used flippantly or mildly. Decolonizing is an important mission that takes purposeful action and effort with a focus on the Indigenous history of colonialism and its impact locally, globally, and individually.

My goal in this article, then, is not to make a metaphor of decolonizing the classroom, but to offer specific and useful ways to work towards decentering the white, settler narrative in the classroom through acknowledgment of land, power dynamics, and the violent history of colonization. With that goal, I realize the need for decolonization as a conversation to take place in the classroom explicitly for both students and teachers, but also outside of the classroom for it to begin to impact society. In other words, educators must explicitly express the difference between the distinct impacts of colonization and other systems of oppression to truly take a stance for indigenous culture, knowledges, and practice. Even as we use social justice movements to begin this work, it is important to work beyond them to distinguish the particular nature of decolonization, which is not just one more item to add to a long list of oppressive issues.

Grande (2018) offers us more wisdom here as she considers the university itself as "an arm of the settler state" (p. 47). In examining both abolitionist and decolonial theorization of the academy and pointing out many tensions between the two, she suggests, rather than treating the two as incommensurable, that we must work toward,

> a parallel politics of dialectical co-resistance. When Black peoples can still be killed but not murdered; when Indians are still made to disappear; when (Indigenous) land and Black bodies are still destroyed and accumulated for settler profit; it is incumbent upon all those who claim a commitment to refusing the white supremacist, capitalist, settler state, to do the hard work of building interconnected movements for decolonization (Grande, 2018, p. 60).

To begin the work to connect movements towards decolonization, it is especially necessary to understand the university as a colonized space. We are confined to the walls of the university, which is always and already colonized, and that confinement can't be changed simply by awareness and consideration of difference. However, we can have these conversations and begin the work of resistance. The violent histories that play a part in the university are deeply intertwined and vary amongst different groups, but there is common ground in an intersectional, feminist, and decolonial approach. This common ground allows us to "commit to collectivity, reciprocity, and mutuality," then "refuse the individualist promises of the institution, be held accountable to the communities we claim as our own, and develop relationships not contingent on social capital" (Grande, 2018, p. 61). As Grande suggests, here, we must necessarily be against the systems in place that reproduce the colonial ideals to work toward true decolonization. While this goes beyond the confines of the classroom and into the institution as a whole, we can individually start to work against these colonial systems by "teaching, strengthening, and honing students' analytical skills to question dominant narratives and develop a critical lens" with which to critique them (Silva, 2018, p. 375).

Ottmann (2017), as a leading figure in decolonizing education, also provides some advice, through the lens of education. "Coming to know" is one of the major steps towards decolonizing and Indigenous education. To take action for a cause, one must first learn about the history, our environment, and even ourselves to account for how these factors play a role in colonizing or decolonizing. Recognizing the issue of colonization and uniting against the colonial systems of the university must be the start, to eventually take action toward decolonizing our classroom and society as a whole. As Ottmann explains,

> Decolonization involves intentional and concerted action to challenge divisive and destructive colonial entities that harm and separate people. Decolonization practices have the power to bring people to meaningful reconciliatory relationships where voice and the respectful hearing of perspective and story are enabled (Ottmann, 2017, p. 103).

Counteracting the limiting and exclusive practices of colonization can begin to take place through social justice initiatives that examine our beliefs as a society and expand them to include indigenous methodologies of listening, observing, and storytelling among others. All these methodologies enable the voices of those previously silenced or marginalized to emerge at the center.

As we have students grapple with these difficult topics in the technical communication and writing classroom, we must make room for them to both listen and reflect on what they hear. For me, this mostly takes place through readings assigned or chosen during the semester that have students question different linguistic communities and their orientation to language. I talk about

language evolution and colonization's impact on the English language especially. McNeal and Elbow (2017) give the practical advice of implementing personal freewriting in our classroom to allow our students to write and learn about their feelings that stem from these difficult conversations. Since everyone inevitably comes into the classroom with preexisting notions about the intersections of race, sex, etc., writing about these feelings will help our students better understand their own positionality and place in the power dynamic of society, and it is important to give our students an avenue to explore these ideas. I also have students write literacy narratives (discussed more in tenant 4 below) along with some community-based research where students observe and document communication practices in workplaces or communities that they inhabit, focusing specifically on how cultural contexts shape technical communication and writing practice. This unit on multilingualism that I teach specifically privileges these indigenous methods of listening, observing, and storytelling and allows students to draw cultural ties to their everyday writing and communication skills. I also have students consider their digital literacies and the technologies that they use. Because "globally, marginalized communities share many experiences with oppression and colonization and use communication technologies as resistance," it is important to combine the issues of the digital with decolonization in the classroom (Steele, 2021, p. 15).

Although the true work of decolonization is difficult for even the traditional writing classroom and is only complicated using digital spaces and multimodality, it is of paramount importance to work to provide an inclusive and equitable classroom environment for BIPOC students. Promoting true activism, indigenous knowledges and methods, and social justice in our teaching is the way to begin this work.

Tenet 4: Privilege a kitchen-table approach that values students' languages and multilingualism

In further promoting indigenous methods, taking a "kitchen table" approach and putting students at the center of our pedagogy is imperative. McNeal and Elbow (2017) explicitly support this concept of a "kitchen table" atmosphere in the classroom to encourage an open dialogue from/with our students. They explain that this atmosphere is "a place of exchange questioning the normalization of status quo stories by serving dishes called other realities, transformation, and change while welcoming everyone to sit at them through our discourse, curriculum, and approach to teaching in relationship to subjugated knowledges" (McNeal & Elbow, 2017, p. 23). Recognizing the value of each person's individual experience and background is incredibly important and can be taken up in the writing and communication classroom through community and linguistic storytelling.

In my classroom, I have students do this work practically through individual and community literacy narratives. Students are often eager to talk about their coming to language or their experience with communication and writing in different spaces which leaves room for us to talk about different knowledge systems and learning styles. For example, one of my students recently wrote their story about growing up in the Philippines and learning to communicate in both English and his home language of Tagalog. In pairing this narrative assignment with readings about colonization and linguistic diversity and justice such as selections from *English with an Accent* by Barrett et al. (2023) and *Linguistic Justice* by Baker-Bell (2020), the student was also able to consider the influence that immigration and colonization have had on their home

language and assimilation to English. Fostering spaces like these for students to share their stories and make connections to these concepts opens doors for more dialogue and greater moves to be made towards a decolonial reality.

Using this kitchen table approach specifically allows space for students to use narratives and storytelling to encourage equal value in the many different voices and backgrounds that our students have. We must also consider other perspectives in the content that we are teaching our students as well. In McNeal & Elbow's (2017) piece, McNeal specifically uses her personal subjectivity to discuss how society has impacted her and the writing classroom. In reflecting on this experience she explains, "I have been influenced by destructive teaching practices, which caused me as a teacher to always ask: who am I not making integral in the subjects I teach and how can my teaching encourage decolonization and social transformation?" (McNeal & Elbow, 2017, p. 20). The question posed here is key to decolonization as an educator in any classroom, but especially in communication and writing courses. We, as teachers, must ask ourselves if we are teaching not only our own experience but also integrating literature and discussions that pertain to other peoples' subjectivity and unique positionality especially as it relates to language and communication which often determines how we are perceived and perceive the world and the power that we hold. McNeal & Elbow (2017) attempt to give teachers perspective by explaining that what we teach drastically influences our students who are the future minds of the world. They argue that if we do not leave room for this personal dialogue in our classroom, that the voices and stories of marginalized people will be left out of not only our classrooms but eventually our world and society as well.

In privileging our students' voices and ways of knowing, we must also necessarily deconstruct the hierarchy between teacher and student by embracing collaboration and reciprocity. McNeal & Elbow's (2017) take on decolonizing the classroom is relevant here with the premise of "maintaining respect for all members," organized as the most important rule in his pedagogy (p. 25). In my classroom, this takes the form of a student individually leading discussion each class period. I use a round table approach where we circle up and discuss readings as a group. I do minimal facilitation during this time, and I have found this practice allows students to take more responsibility for the content being taught in the course. They care much more and want to have input at the beginning of the semester on what material we cover which I allow as well. Using tactics like these that privilege collaboration and reciprocity allows for a student-centered, kitchen table approach.

Another ethical consideration with this kitchen-table, non-hierarchical, and student-centered approach is the system of grading. One could argue that in holding the power of grading, the teacher will always have a hierarchy that will impede true collaboration. Therefore, in my classroom, I try to take a labor-based grading approach on almost all assignments. McNeal & Elbow (2017), in continuing his advocacy for a kitchen-table approach, suggests that a contract grading system is more equitable and inclusive to all students. This approach eliminates harsh competition between students and allows for better relationship building between teacher and student. For my classroom, this might look a bit different than true labor-based grading, but the intentions are still there. I like grading rubrics, and while I know they can be exclusionary, I try to make mine as collaborative as possible by having students help me construct the criteria that are included based on the discussions and material we have covered in class along with the

course objectives. In this way, students almost get a say in what aspects of a project they want to input their labor. I typically use this as a full activity in class and have students openly discuss grading as a constructed system that is flawed, but we also talk about ways that we can make grading practices more equitable. Many students respond quite well to this assignment as having a much greater stake in the outcome of their projects is appealing to them. In considering the digital project that we are privileging in this digital-decolonial approach, this grading system is especially important for multimodal and digital projects. Wood (2019) explains that this grading form is not only more equitable to all students, but it also parallels multimodality in that "true value and learning come from the process, not the end result" (p. 248). In this way, contract grading allows for more focus on the process (labor) than on the product. Contract grading complements the cause for equity that multimodality provides because, "multimodal pedagogy attempts to embrace all student voices" (Wood, 2019, p. 249).

In perpetuating these methods and a kitchen table, non-hierarchical, and student-centered approach teachers can begin to do some of the decolonizing work that we have discussed. It is imperative that these tenets ultimately work together and build on one another, but this tenant is particularly imperative to setting up an equitable learning environment from the start.

Conclusion

In conclusion, connecting technical writing classrooms with a digital approach to composition through an active focus on digital rhetoric and pedagogy, intersectionality, and decolonization within the digital sphere works towards social justice by providing an inclusive learning environment in the technical writing classroom. Technology and digital rhetoric unfurl a new world of possibilities for the technical writing classroom. With the digital realm continuing to evolve and expand, writing instructors must engage with these ever-changing media and modes, adapt, and be flexible, beginning with teaching these technologies to students. At the same time, while teaching these technologies, we must simultaneously consider intersectionality and decolonization theories specifically with students. Teaching students the intersections of identity and how to analyze through an intersectional lens allows them to see the bias in digital spaces and provides a starting point for students to begin subverting them. We must believe in our students' futures here and the great impact that our teaching can have on students' social attitudes and actions even beyond the classroom. In addition to privileging an intersectional approach, decolonization takes more purposeful action and effort to bring about specific change in the classroom and beyond. We can begin this decolonizing work by promoting activism, indigenous knowledges and methods, and relationality and community in our teaching. While this work can begin to take place through social justice initiatives, we must expand them to include indigenous methodologies of listening, observing, and storytelling among others. These non-Western knowledges enable the voices of those previously silenced or marginalized to ultimately emerge at the center within our classrooms. The tenets I have outlined here provide founding scholarship and actionable steps to begin teaching these concepts and doing this work. While this piece provides a framework for enacting a digital-decolonial pedagogy, I also implore other scholars to continue this research and consider how they might honor these tenets and go beyond them in their own classrooms while remaining diligent to social justice initiatives and decolonizing efforts.

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