Chapter 16
Interrogating "Filter Bubbles" Within Content Areas and Language Choices for Multilingual Learners in US Classrooms

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ABSTRACT

Filter Bubbles refer to a state of intellectual isolation that can result from people becoming encapsulated in streams of data. When considering factors that contribute to the language choices of multilingual learners (MLs), specifically in the primary content areas of schooling, the Filter Bubble concept easily transposes into the field of education. According to Quintos, "multicultural educators focus on an education for a more democratic and socially just society" (p. 238). However, standards of learning chosen by states and their school districts represent the values of those who sit in positions of power and govern the concepts to which students are exposed. This chapter endeavors to respond to these questions within the intersections of societal constructs and the schooling contexts of English language arts, science, social studies, and mathematics, and to determine possibilities in which MLs can be provided optimal language choices and afforded the spaces to exercise these choices.

INTRODUCTION

Filter bubbles (Srba et al., 2023) refer to a state of "intellectual isolation" (p. 4) that can result from people becoming encapsulated in streams of data. This includes news or social network updates, that are personalized to reader interests because of algorithm-based searches. Furthermore, people tend to join groups that share their narratives and world views. This phenomenon presents the danger that critical issues will get filtered, leaving people unexposed to views different from their own. Thus, online users may operate under misperceptions shaped by their *echo chambers*, in which users are selectively served information based on personal information (Rhodes, 2022). Such an environment is conducive to increasing biases, notably "confirmation bias" (Bozdag, 2015, p. 39) – a term that connotes seeking or interpreting evidence in ways that are partial to existing beliefs, expectations, or hypotheses at hand. Exposure to filter bubbles can hinder pluralistic dialogue and thus jeopardize democracies in modern society. Various studies have shown the impact of filter bubbles on the creation of polarization and extremism (Srba et al., 2023). These consequences lead to the generation of racist, sexist, or other prejudiced views that might lead one to experience desensitization and further spread of discriminatory materials (Rhodes, 2022). Furthermore, polarization in its extreme form may also lead to social and/or national fragmentation and even civil war (Sanín & Wood, 2014).

When considering factors that contribute to the language choices of multilingual learners (MLs), specifically in the primary content areas of K-12 schooling, the filter bubble concept easily transposes into the field of education. According to Quintos et al. (2001), "multicultural educators focus on an education for a more democratic and socially just society" (p. 238). However, standards of learning chosen by states and their school districts represent the values of those who sit in positions of power and govern the concepts to which students are exposed. Thus, a number of questions arise: What language norms exist within content texts in schooling? How do these text spaces perpetuate or challenge societal language norms? What is the role of the teacher in interrogating these norms in order to ensure equitable learning opportunities for diverse students, especially MLs? This chapter endeavors to respond to these questions within the intersections of societal constructs and the schooling contexts of social studies, science, English language arts, and mathematics, and to determine possibilities in which MLs can be provided optimal language choices and afforded the spaces to exercise these choices.

INTERSECTIONS OF SOCIAL STUDIES AND MISINFORMATION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been impacting and transforming the way people interact and communicate in society (Levy, 2021; Lewis et al., 2019). Due to the empowerment of computers as well as the availability of big data, data produced especially by social media platform users, the phenomenon of mass personalization of communication content is a reality (Hermann, 2022). In this online environment in which people are only exposed to opinions and information that conform to their existing beliefs, the prevalence of such misinformative content leads to false beliefs or manipulated perceptions of reality, the so-called filter bubbles, known for the decrease of diversity (Srba et al., 2023).

The term "filter bubble" was first coined by Eli Pariser in 2010, an Internet activist (Santaella, 2020) and refers to a phenomenon in which personalized internet searches dictate and predict the kind of information a social media platform user might be interested in accessing. This context can be described as if users were confined to their "own information digital world" and confined within a "safe informa-

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