Raciolinguistic Prejudice in the Classroom

Raciolinguistic prejudice is discrimination based on accent, dialect, and speech patterns (Dobinson & Mercieca, 2020). It leads to the unfair treatment of individuals based on how their language practices intersect with their racial or ethnic identity, privileging standardized varieties and perpetuating racial prejudice in educational and social contexts (Flores & Rosa, 2015). Standard Academic English is the form of English used in academic writing and speaking. However, it is not the only way to express academic ideas. The imposition of Standard English in academic settings is a form of racial discrimination that does not reflect the diverse linguistic reality (Kinyon, 2024).

Addressing Raciolinguistic Discrimination in the Classroom

Raciolinguistic discrimination stems from our perceptions of the racialized status of the speaker as opposed to objective linguistic features (Flores & Rosa, 2023). Thus, awareness of our biases and social positions is crucial to addressing the issue (Holden & Smith, 2024).

Some strategies to address raciolinguistic discrimination in the classroom are to:

- Create a welcoming classroom environment
  - Set clear classroom expectations of language variety as the norm with no tolerance for raciolinguistic discrimination (Chaudhuri & Stouck, 2024). This can be done in the syllabus or orally on the first day of class.
  - Do not make inappropriate comments about student language use, including direct mockery, light-hearted jokes, and well-intentioned compliments (e.g. "Your English is so good") (Kubota et al., 2023; Vanegas Rojas et al., 2016).
  - Avoid creating groups or permitting self-selected groups that segregate students by language background (Vanegas Rojas et al., 2016).
- Change assessment focus
  - Shift focus from surface-level aspects of writing and performative aspects of speaking to center meaning making (Chaudhuri & Stouck, 2024). The CaRS model (Swales, 1990) can help identify students' success in setting the research context, identifying the research deficit, and inhabiting the research space.
  - In cases where these aspects of language are a serious concern, leave comments to later stages of the process so as not to demoralize students or interfere with meaning making (Kinyon, 2024).
  - Ensure that language expectations and relevant feedback are clear (Kubota et al., 2023). Provide tools and directions for improvement as appropriate.
  - Give more weight to the process elements of assignments over the final product (Kishimoto, 2018).

Accommodate during the lecture

Slow the speed of speech when lecturing or vary where possible (Kinyon, 2024).

Provide lecture materials, such as slides, to students to help them follow the lecture during class (Kinyon, 2024).

Create space during classroom discussions

Avoid singling out or pressuring students to participate (Vanegas Rojas et al., 2016).

Give students time to form their thoughts when prompted to talk (Kinyon, 2024).

Ensure students with all language backgrounds are given equal space to participate (Page, 2023).

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