

## Chapter 3

# Creating an Inclusive Classroom Culture: A Language Socialization Approach

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The chapter discusses creating an inclusive classroom through a language socialization perspective. The authors suggest that to create an inclusive culture in a multicultural and multilingual classroom, language educators should engage in explicit language socialization practices that promote development of critical cultural consciousness and language awareness. They propose that in the process of creating an inclusive classroom, educators need to attend to affective, individual, and interpersonal domains. Specific practices for use in a language (including ESOL) classroom and a teacher preparation program are provided.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter addresses an issue of establishing an inclusive culture in a multilingual and multicultural language classroom. The inclusive classroom is grounded in the assumption that diversity, which includes racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, gender, and linguistic differences, is not problematic, rather these differences are viewed as cultural resources in the classroom community (Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, Tejada, 1999). Aspects of diversity viewed as resources in the classroom counter oppressive dominant-culture perspectives that view students as needing to assimilate to the dominant ways of being and doing in the classroom. We propose that teachers can support an inclusive classroom culture through explicit language socialization that allows teachers and students to become active participants in the safety zone of the classroom when bringing their diverse experience, languages, and identities together. While teach-

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ers engage in implicit language socialization in classrooms across cultures on a daily basis (Burdelski & Howard, 2020), establishing and addressing norms and expectations in an explicit manner, together with students, contributes to a creation of a more equitable classroom as it ensures that voices and needs of all students are heard. Rather than subtracting students' cultural identities by ignoring their histories, cultures and home languages, an explicit language socialization perspective to developing an inclusive classroom culture has the potential to create meaningful learning communities resulting in higher levels of success for minoritized and marginalized students (Powell & Rightmeyer, 2011).

Success in learning an additional language cannot be measured solely on a student's ability to recognize and manipulate discrete language features, such as grammar, vocabulary or pronunciation. Instead, it can be seen through the students' ability to use language in ways that are culturally and situationally-appropriate, where through the use of language, learners demonstrate their understanding of the appropriateness of these norms. Learners in our classrooms, therefore, engage in the process of language socialization, i.e. learning how to use language in acceptable ways and through the use of language, learning how to become competent members of the target language community (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011).

Language learning in a classroom takes place in a community of learners who come together with a common goal of language acquisition. Viewed from the socio-cultural perspective (Vygotsky, 1978), language learning is fundamentally a social endeavor that is mediated by a teacher who supports and guides the learners along their "Zone of Proximal Development." The students and the teacher engage in the process of meaning-making together as members of the classroom community, which has norms of behavior and interaction. These norms are not independent of the individuals of whom the learning community is composed; it is also not independent of the context in which the classroom is situated and the larger socio-political forces that exist outside of the classroom walls. After all, classrooms and schools are cultural institutions that serve to prepare the future citizens of countries and communities where they are located, and "the nature of discourse in the classroom, despite its special characteristics, reflects wider society norms, values and beliefs" (Leung, 2001, p. 7). To succeed in these communities, students need to learn discourse that "can lead to success and effectiveness in their society, should students wish to achieve such success" (Gee, 2015, p. 250). Such dominant discourse is intimately related to the issues of power, and the "culture of power" (Delpit, 1988). In democratically-oriented education, students need to learn to question the social norms of what it means to "succeed" and to interrogate the issues of power connected to the dominant discourse or what Delpit (1988) has termed the "code of power." Power is enacted through dominant discourse in schools and classrooms and includes "the power of the teacher over the students, the power of... developers of the curriculum to determine the view of the world presented; the power of the state in enforcing compulsory schooling; and the power of an individual or group to determine "normalcy."" (Delpit, 1999, p. 283).

This chapter addresses an issue of establishing an inclusive culture in a multilingual and multicultural language classroom that allows language learners to acquire the dominant discourse of success in the target language and raise their critical cultural consciousness (Kumaravadivelu, 2003) and critical language awareness (Fairclough, 1992) about issues of power connected to this discourse. Critical cultural consciousness and critical language awareness entail becoming aware or conscious about one's own and others' cultures and linguistic and communicative codes and ways in which relations of power are embedded within these cultural and linguistic norms and behaviors, and taking action to change the existing power dynamics. We propose that engaging in this process utilizing strategies of *explicit language socialization* allows teachers and students to become active participants in and critical agents of their

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