


## Chapter 8

# Linguistic Diversity in the Global Classroom Both Fact and Fiction

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Diverse linguistic practices allow students to accept their linguistic selves, improve their academic selves, and understand when and how to speak or write for effective communication and self-expression. This includes navigating differences between spoken and written word and creative and formal writing. While this may seem restrictive, students often engage with exploring rules and standards. This chapter explores connections and practical activities to promote student agency through the use and restriction of diverse linguistics. This chapter reflects on theoretical, pedagogical sources, and the author's firsthand techniques reflecting on the theoretical and practical implications of diverse linguistic inclusion. Teaching linguistic diversity enhances student agency. An approach that incorporates the idea of code-switching and increasing a student's awareness of language within social contexts will prepare students to become high-performing academics, members of the workforce, and global community citizens.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The years 2020 and 2021 have found educators teaching in classrooms where students enter literally (through technology) from various geographical locations, time zones, and home environments. Although this may have happened in the past, the isolation and mitigating circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic have made it particularly important for instructors to take the time to recognize and value student individuality and agency as vital ways to connect. Instruction methodologies with these goals in mind create classrooms where students are more likely to feel invited, appreciated, and secure or at least recognize their teachers taking risks as well as expecting them to be taken during the learning process. Learners will be more willing participants who want to advance the educational lessons and space (hooks, 1994).

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-8985-4.ch008

Additionally, such an educational environment will encourage students to appreciate and experience one another's individuality and agency. Regarding linguistic diversity, creating classrooms that appreciate various dialects, accents, and language forms can assist in recognizing student individuality in ways that create a multi-varied educational community.

Language and identity have long been linked (refer to critical discourse analysis theorists such as Gee, 2011). As such, educational practitioners ought to prioritize both in their instructional activities. However, in order to do the most justice for student futures, great attention should be paid to assisting students in recognizing appropriate language for each venue. This includes navigating differences between the spoken and written word and creative and formal writing, as well as the conventions of various publications. While, at first glance, this may seem restrictive or devaluing, students often engage with and enjoy exploring rules and standards. More so, they often feel empowered when they, for example, understand the conventions of appropriate presentation rules for linguistic communication. Furthermore, knowing these conventions allow students to adjust and/or consciously make choices to deviate from them. In light of these concerns, a portion of this chapter is dedicated to techniques that allow students to build this knowledge base and feel empowered by it while exploring avenues of self-expression using adventurous and expanding concepts of language use from the author's own classroom instruction. In fostering this sense of agency, learners have opportunities to digest classroom based practices and adjust them for non-academic purposes in the future. In other words, these practices can help pupils see themselves (or develop their identities) within classes.

Additionally, an oft-excluded portion of the discussion concerning linguistic diversity by policy makers and administrators ignores the history (largely in the US, but indicative of other areas) and the problematics of standardized languages. Lovejoy et al. (2018) and Clots-Figueras and Masella (2013) have pointed out that one of the silenced parts of discussions surrounding linguistic diversity (or the lack of it) reflects historical and contemporary efforts to enforce assimilationist ideals, which in turn result in economic (dis)advantages. Perhaps more importantly, Lovejoy et al. went on to point out that "US history shows that language variety is a common feature of life, one that is at points accepted but more often is resisted in an attempt to rein in differences among people in society" (324). This illustrates well how damaging ignoring concerns of students' rights to their own language can be to the identity and agency of students within classrooms as well as when they move beyond them.

Furthermore, it is necessary to recognize that here, *appropriate* is not intended to indicate value or power. As an instructor, I often tell students to "Carry it with confidence," meaning that when a person acts with confidence, others (often) will perceive their choices as appropriate. Take, for example, TED Talks. Often these pieces incorporate highly specific language or concepts and blend them with real-world or conversational speech patterns. In doing so, these speakers still appear not as specialists (which they most often are) but also as engaging people the viewer might want to befriend, i.e., not pedagogues speaking on the topic from the ivory tower. These speakers carry their presentations with confidence, and in doing so, they often violate conventional presentation rules. Their seemingly informal presentation style is not less than, unimpactful, or agency-reducing. These models of communication illustrate the idea that "No one speaks or writes in Standard American English all the time; highlighting students' language differences or those they are familiar with would become a bridge to understanding and appreciating devalued Englishes" (Bohney, 2016, 69). In many cases, these works stick in the minds of viewers, in part because their language (as opposed to their content) is relatable and geared toward the audience. Their choices can serve as beginning models for how students might choose to understand conventions, when to bend those rules, and how to produce effects mindfully in an audience.

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