Chapter 9
Empowering Linguistic Diversity:
Theory Into Practice in Multilingual Writing Classrooms

Anita Chaudhuri
University of British Columbia, Canada

Jordan Stouck
University of British Columbia, Canada

ABSTRACT

The chapter uses the case of multilingual students to discuss how teaching and learning practices in Canadian writing classrooms must examine "systems and structures of linguicism, racism, and classism, which are interrelated and continuously shaping one another'' to develop an understanding of linguistic racism. A critical dialogic approach was used to listen to the study participants and explore strategies to promote decolonial practice in the writing classroom and inform literature on Canadian multilingual pedagogy. The chapter identifies themes of diversity, curriculum design and instructional practice aligned with linguistic justice practices, and perceptions of success and challenges to recommend theoretical standpoints and examples of classroom practice. Through this process of negotiating theory into practice, the authors move from a focus on linguistically and culturally responsive pedagogy toward sustaining and revitalizing pedagogy. They conclude with macro-level strategies and a call to promote and sustain linguistic justice.

Multilingual learners are appreciated in pedagogical research for their unique voice, diverse identities and language learning practices that are informed by socio-cultural experiences (e.g., Bhowmik & Chaudhuri, 2022; Canagarajah, 2016; Cummins, 2000, 2007; Marshall & Marr, 2018; Norton, 2013). Therefore, it is important that course development and assessment practices have the flexibility to encourage distinctness in student work (Burgess & Rowsell, 2020; Schissel, Leung, López-Gopar & Davis, 2018). How instructors teach and assess should complement diverse linguistic and cultural values and associations,

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literacy practices, and socio-historical narratives. Researchers have noted that, without such validations, marginalized communities can go through a process of "internalization" that leads to self-devaluation, lack of confidence, and low engagement with learning and institutional expectations (Hudley & Mallinson, 2014). Indeed, to decolonize education, address social justice and sustain culturally distinct ways of learning, all instructors must engage with students to co-create knowledge (Accurso & Mizell, 2020; Gebhard & Accurso, 2023; Motha, 2014). Motha (2014) views such co-constructed knowledge as a way for instructors "to embrace their own identities" (p. 3) in "safe spaces" (p. 4) uninterrupted by institutional hierarchies. We argue that decolonial pedagogical motives can make classrooms safe havens for students to share their unique identities. In fact, such recognition of an engaged self can empower classrooms to "dismantle unequal relations of power between standardized English used by White L1 English users and other... users, many of whom are racialized" (Kubota, 2022, p. 5) and embrace decolonial thinking in knowledge production.

In this chapter, a Canadian case study of an advanced communication course for multilingual students is used to present recommendations for linguistically responsive and culturally sustaining pedagogy. We use a critical dialogic approach to ask instructors about pedagogical choices, reflect on their teaching stances and classroom practice, and assess how forms of linguistic justice are clearly articulated or emerge in their classrooms. As scholar-practitioners, we draw inferences from these dialogic interactions to identify macro-strategies, particularly around assessment, that are applicable in diverse learning contexts.

The Canadian scenario presented in this chapter is particularly interesting because the 2021 Census data revealed that "one in five Canadian households were multilingual" with "a non-official language, alone or with one or both official languages" spoken in "90% of multilingual households" (Statistics Canada, 2023). Multilingualism at home combined with a typically high international student enrollment in post-secondary institutions (The Daily, 2020), lays emphasis on learning practices informed by linguistic diversity. Indeed, Canada's official policies, combined with its historical development of writing instruction in ways that are distinct from the U.S. (see Clary-Lemon, 2009; Wright-Taylor, 2021), means that Canadian classrooms warrant further study. The linguistic justice work already begun in the U.S. offers valuable guidelines; however, as Huo (2020) notes, despite Canada's "camouflage of meritocracy and colorblindness" higher education in this country nevertheless "marginalizes and excludes minorities" (p. 24). Therefore, we use the case of multilingual students, both domestic and international learners, to discuss how teaching and learning practices in the Canadian writing classroom must examine "systems and structures of linguicism, racism, and classism, which are interrelated and continuously shaping one another'' (Baker-Bell, 2020b, p. 16) to develop an understanding of linguistic racism. In particular, the chapter analyzes instructor attitudes and, informed by Inoue's (2019a) probing question "How do we language so people stop killing each other, or what do we do about white language supremacy?", identifies pedagogical and assessment strategies to promote linguistic justice.

We also find it important to recognize the role of researcher positionality in qualitative studies such as this. Anita Chaudhuri's scholarship and practice has evolved across multiple locations and learning cultures. Her research and teaching experiences in second language writing, rhetoric and composition represent a negotiated space for diverse voices, learning styles and expectations. Jordan Stouck is a settler scholar with a background in Writing Across the Curriculum and genre theory; she has taught in diverse classrooms for nearly two decades. Our individual positionalities contribute towards an interpretation of linguistic racism as justice focused so that fairness and equity concerns are addressed in classroom practice, cognizant of diverse cultures, multiple learning styles, varied learner expectations, and supportive of learning progression across disciplines. We use our authorial agency, choices in course design