

Chapter 14

A Systematized Review of Anti-Racist Pedagogical Strategies

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ABSTRACT

Racism permeates postsecondary language classrooms around the world which affects the experiences and learning outcomes of language students, namely those who study English as an additional language and English as a foreign language, referred to as additional language learners (ALLs), English as a second language (ESL), or English language learners (ELLs). Through an interrogation of the connection between race and language instruction, this chapter discusses anti-racist practices that interfere with language teaching in higher education. It presents a systematized review that aims to critically examine existing literature on the interrogation of racism within higher education with a focus on anti-racist pedagogical strategies. Critical Race Theory (CRT) guides the analysis and highlights the underlying power structures and systemic racism that shape language education. This review finds evidence of epistemological racism, linguistic biases, White supremacy, and English language dominance in the higher education language classroom. Recommendations for teacher practice are made.

INTRODUCTION

Regarding English language education, research demonstrates that Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) practices focus on assimilating immigrants into the dominant English language and culture, rather than disrupting hierarchies of power (Pavlenko, 2002; Philipson, 1992). Historically, the English language has been perceived as fixed and unchanging, with teachers assuming the role of possessors of English knowledge that students were expected to attain. Teachers commonly made refer-

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ences to “Standard English” (or variations like “good English” or “correct English”), which reflects the influence of standard language ideology that prioritizes certain linguistic practices as more authoritative or valid, compared to other languages (Swift, 2021). Research also indicates that there is a connection between race and language instruction, but more pointedly, racist and colonial underpinnings thrive in the language classroom (Kubota & Lin, 2006). Issues of epistemological racism, White supremacy, and social hierarchical power structures are part of this dynamic. According to Suraweera (2020), teaching approaches, inherent in TESOL, reproduce and affirm unequal power structures that are underpinned by settler-colonial attitudes that marginalize non-White and non-native English speakers.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

In crafting this chapter, the authors deliberately chose to exclusively employ Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a theoretical foundation recognizing its unparalleled analytical strength to illuminate the interconnection between language and race. CRT’s well-established and comprehensive framework extends beyond individual linguistic experience allowing for an in-depth exploration of the systemic nature of linguistic inequities and emphasizing how race shapes the essence of language. CRT’s principal message is to emphasize and analyze how systemic racism is ingrained in social structures and institutions, impacting individuals based on their racial identity. In addition, intersectionality, a concept closely associated with CRT stresses the interconnected nature of social categories of race, gender, class, and more, acknowledging that individuals experience multiple layers of privilege and oppression simultaneously. While some critics argue that CRT may employ essentialist viewpoints oversimplifying complex issues by generalizing experiences and perspectives within racial groups and that CRT identifies problems with existing systems without always providing concrete and practical solutions for addressing these issues, it stands as a winning choice for this review. The strategic decision to choose CRT aligns with the study’s goal of providing a comprehensive synthesis, advancing understanding of the impact of racial dynamics on linguistic structures and practices in higher education.

While raciolinguistics, as highlighted by Alim et al., (2016), underscores the importance of recognizing race construction through language and discourse, the theoretical framework proposed by Flores and Rosa (2015, 2017) primarily emphasizes educational approaches perpetuating racial normativity. However, CRT’s broader systemic focus better aligns with the study’s objective to comprehensively address racial and linguistic inequalities (Alim et al., 2016; Flores & Rosa, 2015, 2017). In response to the normalization of Whiteness in language studies, scholars in TESOL turn to CRT. Crump (2014a) introduces LangCrit as an emerging framework, yet CRT’s more established literature and broader applicability to systemic analysis in educational contexts justify the exclusive focus on CRT in this chapter (Crump, 2014a).

To interrogate race and racism in the postsecondary language question, one must first define racism. According to Miles and Brown (2003), racism may be defined as a “representational form which by designing discrete human collectivities, necessarily functions as an ideology of inclusion and exclusion” (p. 104). Solorzano (1998) identified three prominent features of racism: (a) the belief that one group is superior; (b) this “superior” group has the power to carry out racist acts, and (c) various racial/ethnic groups are affected (p. 124).

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