PERSPECTIVES ON EDUCATION,SOCIETY, AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

An Integrated Approach

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SHAPING EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES THROUGH LANGUAGE, COMMUNICATION, AND IDENTITY

A. Paunanthie [1], Dr. A. Tholappan [2]

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Abstract:

In this chapter, the relationship between language, communication, and identity in education is explained. The paper contends that classrooms are not value-free contexts for the transmission of skills but rather are dynamic locations where student subjectivities are both negotiated and produced. This social validation, while it is employed, validates, privileges, and empowers a dominant "standard" language and class group, marginalizing others. Clearly, this power differential, which manifests through "knowledge" of one's own linguistic superiority and hegemonic discourse in the classroom, can lead to student alienation, identity conflict, and reduced academic engagement. Instead, this chapter offers a possible direction for a pedagogy that is empowering and respects linguistic identity. It espouses all concepts related to translanguaging, using the full language capability of students as well as Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy, culturally and linguistically sustaining practices in the CLR classroom. From this process of developing a critical language awareness and training instructors, classrooms can be transformed to be accommodating of and respectful to linguistic diversity, seeing it as a strength for learning and as a foundation for liberation.

Keywords: *Linguistic Identity, Translanguaging, Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy, Standard Language Ideology, Critical Language Awareness*

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Introduction:

Take Aarav, a precocious schoolboy in Delhi, whose life at home is filled with the musicality of Hindi and Bhojpuri. Nevertheless, in the classroom, he must speak only in standard Hindi or English. His teacher is constantly correcting him when he uses a Bhojpuri idiom to represent a complex idea, and demands the "correct" phrase. Aarav is deflated; his cultural expression has been delegitimized in the scholarly arena. Also consider Fatima, a second-generation Pakistani-Danish student in Copenhagen, who must shift between the Punjabi of her family, the Danish of her peers, and the English of the global media. She is silent in class, uncertain of which linguistic self to project. These examples highlight the main argument of the chapter, which is that language, communication, and identity are intertwined in the classroom and are always in negotiation. Education is not a neutral transfer of skills, but a deeply identity-constructing process. Our languages, our dialects, and our ways of communicating are not just tools or skills; they are part of who we are and how the world sees us (Cummins, 2001). When one language variety is selected over others in educational systems, it is not merely a pedagogical choice but an act of social validation or marginalization that is very meaningful for the student's identity (Lippi-Green, 2012). This chapter will examine the dialectical relationship between these two tendencies and based on existing theory and recent research, will provide a way forward towards more empowering and inclusive forms of education.

Language and Communicative Competence:

Language is a complex, symbolic, and rule-governed system for communication. Socio-linguistically, but it is more appropriately understood as a social practice (Gee, 2014). Dell Hymes' notion of communicative competence is important in this regard. Thus, people need to know not only the grammar of a language (linguistic competence) but also the social and cultural rules for when, how, and with whom to use it (communicative competence). A student may have grammatical competence but lack the communicative competence necessary to engage successfully within a particular classroom discourse community, such as knowing when it is their turn to speak.

Identity and Positionality:

Identity is not an essence located within individuals; rather, it is an ongoing performance produced and reproduced through social interactions and power relations (Hall, 2011). It is a "production" – one that is continually made and remade within representation and discourse. Instead, the student does not bring an identity to the classroom; it is formed in the moment and negotiated with teachers, peers, and curriculum. Their social location in terms of race, class, gender, and language is a very significant factor in this process. A student's linguistic identity is therefore a central aspect of this continuously changing self.

The Ideology of the "Standard Language":

The most insidious among them is the ideology of the "Standard Language". This "standard" (e.g., Standard American English, Received Pronunciation in the UK, or Khariboli Hindi in India) is usually positioned as the correct, neutral, and superior way of communicating. it is, in fact, a social construct that represents the dialect of the powerful (Lippi-Green, 2012). The outcome is a linguistic system in which students who speaks non-standard or heritage languages are perceived as less intelligent or capable. In South Asia, for instance, this is evidenced in the marginalization of dialects like Bhojpuri, Sindhi, or Tamil in favor of the dominant state languages or English (Swargiary, 2024).

Code-Switching: Strategic Skill vs. Forced Assimilation

In this environment, students often learn to code-switch, or intentionally alter their language or dialect to match the context. Though this ability can be helpful, it must be distinguished. In one context, code-switching for strategic purposes enhances a student's linguistic flexibility; in the other, code-switching is not optional – it is necessary for the denial and repression of one's own language/dialect in order to be accepted and succeed. The latter is very psychologically taxing, as it requires students to check their identity at the door of the classroom, which can lead to alienation and lack of motivation (Alshihry, 2023).

Hegemonic Classroom Discourse:

The nature of the communication in the classroom serves to bolster these trends. The prevalent Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF)

sequence, in which the teacher initiates a question, a student answers, and the teacher evaluates the response, locates authority for valid knowledge and language solely with the teacher. Such a discourse pattern has the potential to silence students from cultural backgrounds that privilege collaborative storytelling, indirect ways of responding, or respectful silence, thus invalidating their communicative identity (Nigar & Kostogriz, 2024).

Impact on Academic Achievement and Motivation:

On the other hand, when the linguistic identity of students is validated, students will show more 'intrinsic motivation and interest'. The teacher's role is not neutral; their instructional approaches and perceptions act as a powerful filter that can either validate or marginalize a student's linguistic and cultural identity. As Piratheeban & Bandara (2024) demonstrate, teacher-related factors—including their teaching methods, facilitative style, and the support they provide—are ranked by educators themselves as the second most influential factor in developing student readiness for self-directed learning, which is intrinsically linked to academic motivation and a positive sense of self. In this respect, Ratri et al. (2024), for instance, conclude that having local traditions represented in the English curriculum in Southern Asia 'made a difference in terms of the students' attitude and motivation to learning'.

Identity Conflict and Marginalization:

When a school devalues a student’s home language, it devalues who they are and where they come from. This can cause a very painful cognitive dissonance where students must decide between academic achievement and loyalty to their culture. In one study of Korean HL learners, difficulties in preserving their mother tongue are linked to feelings of cultural dislocation and identity confusion (Alshihry, 2023). In Europe, for example, students of Turkish or Arabic descent in countries like Germany or France are made to assimilate and thus develop a fragmented identity.

Translanguaging as a Pedagogical Framework

Translanguaging, meanwhile, challenges the notion of separate, bounded languages like “English” and “Punjabi” by conceptualizing the multilingual speaker’s linguistic repertoires as a single, coherent

system (García & Wei, 2014). This sounds very much like creating spaces in classrooms for students to deploy their own linguistic resources and to value them as a legitimate part of the learning process. For instance, a student in Bangladesh might mastermind a story in Sylheti but write it in Standard Bengali or in English; a group of students in multilingual Switzerland might experiment with German, French, and Italian to discuss a science concept but present their results in one of these languages. This way, such an approach explicitly reframes multilingualism not as an issue but as an advantage and valuable cognitive and cultural good for the entire class. Combination models that make use of both the face-to-face, classroom method and technology enhanced models like m-learning, appear to be particularly well suited for aiding in flexible, student-directed translanguaging in which students' complex linguistic repertoire allows them to move fluidly between modalities and media (Tholappan & Begam, 2024).

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP)

According to Paris and Alim, instead of aiming to be relevant, CSP requires that teachers "sustain and nurture students' cultural and linguistic identities" (2017, p. 1). That commitment would be to texts and writers from different languages and cultural perspectives, like teaching Tamil literature in Sri Lankan schools or Afro-Caribbean poetry in British schools. It requires valuing the stories and "funds of knowledge" each of our students bring from their homes and communities, and to see these as the center of the learning process.CSP also requires opening up the discursive space for multiple, culturally situated ways of communicating by attending to and legitimizing collaborative, narrative, and other non-dominant forms of discourse that go beyond the traditional Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) pattern.

Fostering Critical Language Awareness:

Critical Language Awareness is the practice of "making power and ideology as visible as possible by explicitly teaching students about language variation, the social history of "standard" languages, and the politics of accent and dialect" (Gee, 2014). For example, one lesson might look at the way British colonialism created English as a language of power in South Asia, or how the French Academy polices the "purity" of the French language. Through this, students also gain the power to be conscious of their own language use, as they understand

the reasons why certain language forms are privileged and can therefore become agents, rather than subjects of linguistic norms.

Role of Institutional Responsibility and Teacher Development:

'Linguistic ecosystems' that are inclusive do not just exist. This would mean to include investments in teacher training programs that give teachers the instruments to do translanguaging and use CSP (Tian & Zhang-Wu, 2022). This further extends to training teachers in techno-pedagogical skills, e.g., use of blended learning, in order to prepare them for a heterogeneous contemporary classroom (Jayanthi & Tholappan, 2016). In general, a curriculum needs to be created that values linguistic diversity and supports HL programs. According to Akintayo et al. (2024), cross-cultural instructional design frameworks are essential for designing learning environments where all students feel they belong.

Conclusion:

The exploration of the complex interplay between language, communication, and identity in education suggests that the classroom is never neutral. It is a space where students are constantly validated or invalidated, and it is fluid and sometimes hostile. As Aarav, Fatima, and many others demonstrate, the languages and dialects that students bring to school are not merely carriers of information; rather, they are integral to who they are, where they come from, and how they make sense of the world. The continual promotion of a "standard" language, the power relations inherent in classroom interactions, and the push for assimilation all work together to foster educational contexts in which linguistic diversity is seen as a handicap rather than a potential resource. The effects of this marginalization are far-reaching and affect academic achievement, motivation, and even one's sense of belonging. "Symbolic violence" occurs when the educational system asks students to repress part of themselves in order to be successful, and the result can be internal conflict and cultural dislocation. However, this chapter has also sought to point to a way forward. The theories of communicative competence and identity as performance, and the praxis of translanguaging, Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP), and Critical Language Awareness, are a strong foundation for this blueprint of change.

The point is not to be able to 'deal with' diversity but to see and use it as a form of learning. The classroom can become an ecosystem where students' multilingualism is re-positioned as a cognitive asset, a variety of cultural texts and communicative styles are introduced, and students are encouraged to understand language and power critically. But this requires more than the goodwill of individual teachers, rather a systemic commitment through supportive policies, purposeful curriculum design, and professional development. At its core, an education for liberation does not run an either/ or dichotomy between one's past and one's future. It understands that the greatest and most meaningful learning comes from the active participation of each student with their whole linguistic and cultural identity, and the student is considered the "center of the enterprise" and welcomed, honored, and integrated into the effort to build knowledge. When we value the languages they speak, we value them; and in doing so we let education be used as an oppressive tool, and instead use it as an agent of liberation.

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