

Linguistic Diversity inside the Post-secondary Classroom

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Today's Road Map

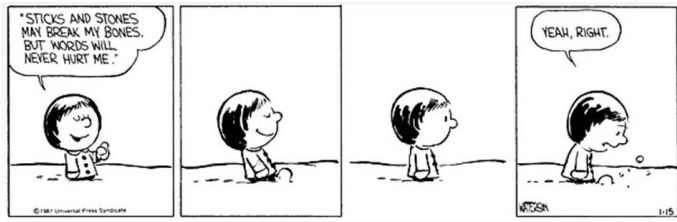
1. Why are we here?
2. What is language?
3. Appreciating diversity through linguistics
4. Language as divisive tool
5. Conclusions and further inquiry

The rationale for this talk:



- Language is all around us, and it can be used in various ways:
 - to build and support one another, and
 - to distance and exclude one another.
- How we use and facilitate the use of language with students, staff and faculty can have a significant impact on an inclusive environment in the classroom, lab and work environment of the post-secondary institution.

The rationale for this talk:



Our words, and use of language, matters.

Language as Divisive Tool:

Language can be used as a divisive tool in the form of microaggressions (i.e., an indirect, subtle or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group).

What you know about...

Language... What is it?



What you know about...

Using only one word, how might we "describe" the purpose of language?
(Try not to use spaces; if you must use more than one word, use dashes in place of spaces)



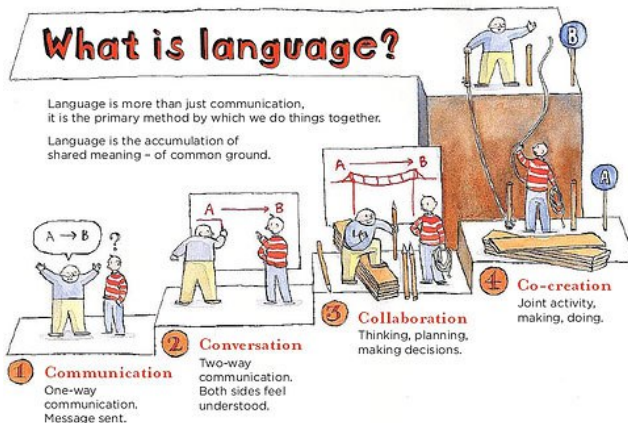
Respond at **PollEv.com/wilrankinen876**



Text **WILRANKINEN876** to **37607** once to join, then text your message

(link)

Language is a tool for communication... and...



Okay... But,
what is missing?

(<http://www.xplaner.com/2008/04/05/what-is-language/>)

Language as tool for self expression and identity



Similar to the choices we make using fashion and other behaviors for constructing and maintaining our identity, we use language strategically - though not always consciously.

Some common myths about language:

- ❶ Animals have language just like humans.
- ❷ Children learn to use language through explicit teaching or memorization.
- ❸ Reading and writing are an essential part of language.
- ❹ Language is static, but it can deteriorate over time.
- ❺ Some languages/dialects are more complex or better than others.





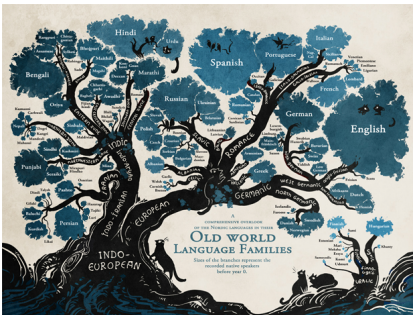
(Linguistic Codes)

- Languages vs. Dialects
 - Dialects are mutual intelligent with each other, while languages are not.
- Dialects vs. L1 Accents
 - Accents restricted to word/pronunciation differences.
 - Types: regional and social
- L1 Accents vs. L2 Accents
 - L1 accents = regional/social
 - L2 accents = foreign-accents

English and other languages:

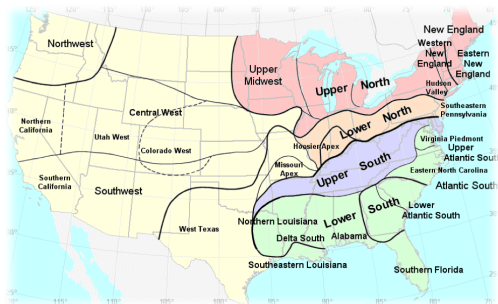
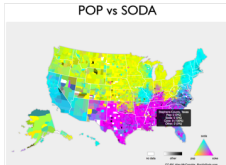


- There are approximately 6,900 languages in the world; and this number is dropping.
- Many languages are related to one another, and can be grouped together known as families.
 - e.g., English, as well as German, Swedish and other related languages, form the Germanic language family.



(Word cloud | Language Family Tree)

Regional dialects and L1 accents:



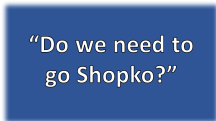
(2nd-person PL | Pop vs. Soda | Regional Dialects)

- Regional varieties, dialects or accents, are largely geographically based and are constantly changing.
- Regional varieties of American English (AE) are not getting less distinct but more.
 - Debunking yet another myth: TV and other forms of mass communication do not have a “normalizing” effect on general AE.

Sociolects and ethnolects:



- Social dialect, or sociolect, refers to a way of speaking associated with a group (such as socioeconomic class, gender identity, age group, etc.).
- Ethnolect refers to a speech variety associated with an ethnic group.
- Sociolects or ethnolects are stable and fully formed dialects.
e.g., African American English, Chicano English, Cajun English



(Linguistic Variation | AAE | Cajun)

Foreign-accented speech:



(German Coastguard)

- Foreign-accented speech are commonly thought of as “broken” or ill-formed versions of the target language.
- However, these “errors” are often predictable and patterned based on the first language of the speaker.
- Native speakers are able to process L2 accents more readily with increased input and motivation.

Linguistic diversity and microaggressions:



Our words, and use of language, matters.

Language as Divisive Tool:

Our linguistic diversity can be used as a divisive tool in the form of microaggressions (i.e., an indirect, subtle or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group).

Group Activity:



- Instructions:
 - Break up into groups
 - Read scenario, then address the following questions:

Guiding Questions:

- 1 What is the microaggression?
- 2 What is the differing perspectives?
- 3 What are the potential solutions (short/long term)?

L2 accent:

Scenario 1:

A student fresh out of college in India has gotten her first job as a professor in the United States. She is nervous for the new environment, but excited because she is teaching what she loves — Biology. On her first day, she notices many students not taking notes, despite her recommendation to do so. Hardly anyone raises their hand, and this goes on for an entire semester. She knows her students are struggling with the material because their test scores are below average and several students have dropped the class. She doesn't understand why no one comes to her office hours. At the end of a discouraging first semester, she receives her reviews from students. Almost every student marked down that they couldn't understand a word she said and that her accent is the reason why they did poorly in the class.

Guiding Questions:

- 1 What is the microaggression?
- 2 What is the differing perspectives?
- 3 What are the potential solutions (short/long term)?

Regional and Social Dialects:

Scenario 2:

The teacher overhears a group of girls struggling to comprehend a topic. The teacher asks if there are any questions. A student raises her hand and says, "Can I aks you a question?" Noticeably annoyed by this, the teacher replies "No you may not 'axe' me a question, but you can 'ask' me a question." The student responds, "Nevermind"

Guiding Questions:

- 1 What is the microaggression?
- 2 What is the differing perspectives?
- 3 What are the potential solutions (short/long term)?

Gender:

Scenario 3:

"That's a great answer, you guys!" says the professor as he gathers feedback from a group of students. He notices that two of the girls in the class roll their eyes in response. He asks them why they are displeased, but they do not answer. Later that night, the professor felt uneasy about the girls rolling their eyes at him in class, so he decided to venture on to "Rate My Prof" to see if any students post about him. He is appalled to find that many students refer to him as misogynistic. He has no idea how anything he has ever said could be misconstrued to make him appear sexist, but he sees that more than one student has posted these thoughts over the years.

Guiding Questions:

- 1 What is the microaggression?
- 2 What is the differing perspectives?
- 3 What are the potential solutions (short/long term)?

Gender Identity:

Scenario 4:

You are sitting in a freshman writing class. The professor says that the pronoun “they” should only refer to two or more people. She says that “they” used as a gender-neutral, singular pronoun is bad English and that “he or she” is the correct form for when the subject’s sex is unknown. If the subject’s sex is known, the writer should use either “he” or “she”. The professor adds that non-binary pronouns are a fad and have no place in academic writing. As an aside, she says that the writer should use their subjects’ full first and last legal names rather than a preferred name when writing formally.

At the end of the lecture, the person who sits next to you, K.C., quickly leaves instead of staying to chat. You remember that K.C. uses ze/zir/zirs pronouns and ze goes by zir initials.

Guiding Questions:

- 1 What is the microaggression?
- 2 What is the differing perspectives?
- 3 What are the potential solutions (short/long term)?

Socioeconomic status and education:

Scenario 5:

The teacher is educating a class on philosophy. "... The quintessential reasoning preluding Plato's Apology are those influenced by Hippocrates teachings throughout Plato's adolescent years... Are there any questions." A student responds with, "What do you mean "preluding"? Can you explain it in another way?" The teacher says, "Let me facilitate your assimilation of Plato's reasoning with an elaboration on the values that are the cornerstone of Hippocrates's beliefs..." After an elaborate explanation, the teacher seems quite pleased with himself as he moves on to the next topic. However, the student's expression remains blank.

Guiding Questions:

- 1 What is the microaggression?
- 2 What is the differing perspectives?
- 3 What are the potential solutions (short/long term)?

Prescriptive pressures on language:

Scenario 6:

The professor corrects a student's preposition use in an academic writing sample taken at the beginning of the semester. In the writing sample, the professor is concerned about how often that student dangles her prepositions and takes a considerable amount of time to give feedback on how and why dangling prepositions should be corrected in future examples of that student's work. Throughout the semester, this continues to be a problem. In a heated class discussion toward the end of the semester, the student speaks up in class to give her opinion. The professor follows up the student's comment with praise but then adds "... even if she used a dangling preposition in her argument" which elicited a few chuckles from other students. The student did not speak for the rest of the class period.

Guiding Questions:

- 1 What is the microaggression?
- 2 What is the differing perspectives?
- 3 What are the potential solutions (short/long term)?

Main take-home points:

- ① Language is a tool for communication, but it is also a means of constructing and maintaining one's identity.
 - However, linguistic diversity can also be used as a divisive tool.
- ② The use of inclusive teachings and learning strategies includes not only the cultural differences of your students, staff and faculty but the linguistic differences as well.
- ③ A set of inclusive teaching and learning strategies to support linguistic diversity can readily be implemented inside the post-secondary classroom.



Questions or Comments?

(Slides located at www.gvsu.edu/csd)