



Building Boundaries: Tackling or Embracing Colour-Evasiveness in Language Education in Finland?

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Over the last decade, multilingualism and language awareness have gained a fairly firm foothold in language education research. However, studies of language awareness and multilingualism, even critical ones, still treat language in isolation from other factors that play a role in defining human identity, such as gender, social class, and dis/ability. Particularly race has been sidelined from the mainstream conversation despite the efforts of several scholars (e.g., Alemanji & Mafi, 2018). By the word "race" we refer to a social construct based on one's appearance that is and has historically been used to group and hierarchise people.

Several researchers have shown how race and, for example, the interpretation of a person's language proficiency are intertwined, placing non-white language users at a disadvantage (see García et al., 2021). Although some openings for applying raciolinguistics in analysing data in language education have been made (Mustonen, 2021), the debate is still fairly absent in Finnish applied linguistics. This situation is particularly worrying, as racism is a wide-spread problem in Finland (e.g., Keskinen et al., 2021).

In this presentation, we present examples of data in which race is either discussed or evaded, as the teachers and students navigate the systemic problems in the microcosm of a classroom. The data was collected in a Finnish school context as part of a wider ethnographic project investigating the de/legitimation of knowledges of migrant adults. It includes fieldnotes, interviews and classroom recordings.

We want to open and extend the debate on how colour-evasiveness (Annamma et al., 2017), i.e., the bypassing of racial issues in the context of language education, at worst builds boundaries and increases inequalities in society. We invite all the conference participants to discuss why raciolinguistics should be on the agenda of every language education specialist in Finland and elsewhere.

Keywords: Raciolinguistics, Colour-evasiveness, Education

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