

## **Toward Sociolinguistic Justice for Racialized Youth**

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Every year around the globe, students from linguistically subordinated groups enter educational systems that are ill equipped to serve them. For young people who are racially as well as linguistically marginalized, schools may be particularly harmful, as hegemonic educational processes perpetuate racist ideologies and structures while habitually undermining the cultural and linguistic practices that are very basis of students' identities. In response to this crisis of educational inequality, issues of social justice, and especially sociolinguistic justice (Bucholtz et al. 2014), have come to the forefront of research in applied linguistics and related fields. Language researchers increasingly acknowledge that a commitment to social justice is a basic ethical professional responsibility, and such scholars have been prominent advocates for linguistic equality in schools and other institutional settings (e.g., Avineri et al. 2015; Blackledge 2000; Corson 1993; Nieto 2010; Skutnabb-Kangas 2009; Wesely et al. 2014).

Yet in challenging the ideological dominance of monolingualism, standard languages, and academic registers in educational settings, many researchers do not take the next step: interrogating the more pervasive and hence less visible educational practices that continue to make schools and classrooms—even those led by well-trained, well-intentioned educators—unsafe spaces for racially and linguistically minoritized youth. In this talk I identify four ways in which such young people and their learning experiences are misconstrued and misconceptualized, and in each case I offer an alternative strategy for conceptualizing the education of youth of color in order to advance racial, linguistic, and educational equity. The four reconceptualizations that I propose, drawing on my own and others' research, are the following:

- (1) explicitly and critically focusing on students' experiences of racialization through language and vice versa, rather than treating race and language as taken-for-granted categories (Rosa forthcoming)
- (2) recognizing the linguistic and cultural expertise and knowledge production of youth of color rather than positioning them within discourses of novicehood and deficit (Paris & Alim 2014, forthcoming)
- (3) viewing the education of young people of color as a mutual act of accompaniment and hence partnership rather than a unidirectional act of empowerment, which erases youth agency (Bucholtz et al. 2016)
- (4) understanding socially meaningful and transformative learning as based in affective engagement with the material social world rather than the cognitive processing of abstract ideas (Bucholtz et al. forthcoming)

My discussion is illustrated by data drawn from a social-justice-centered academic outreach program that I direct, which works with low-income Latina/o high school students to explore issues of language, power, race, and identity in their own lives and communities and to address these issues through original research or community action projects. The examples point to some of the ways in which reconceptualizing the education of youth of color can help advance sociolinguistic and educational justice for racially and linguistically marginalized groups.