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DISCOURSES OF BILINGUALISM: FACEBOOKING IN THE MARGINS— GENERATING SEXIST, CLASSIST, AND RACIST BACKLASH

Mary Frances Agnello
With Insights from Cherie Brown
Akita International University



Events leading up to last presidential election

- Time period—2015-2017 more focused on period prior to the election
 - FB –platform for the “wiser” set as the young started using Snapchat and Instagram
 - Friended people from international array of academic and community arts organizations
 - Friended people from high school
- 

Media attention to immigration


- As neoliberal reforms were failing
- People frustrated with their cost of health care
- Perception that people who do not speak English are getting more breaks
- Discussion
 - ❖ People's opinions are entrenched based in personal experiences
 - ❖ Difference and diversity are not tolerated
 - ❖ Racism, classism, and sexism shrouded in accusations of anti-Americanism are resorted to quickly

Theoretical background


- Critical discourse analysis—CDA
(Foucault, 1972, 1991; Agnello, 2001) –
power and knowledge relations = truth
- Feminist insights (Noddings, 1993, 1995)
Care, community, connection in education
- Freire (1970)—transform our lives, transform
the world

Methodology

- Conducted several readings
- Discussed over months
- Read, re-read, re-considered
- Two white males who were Trump supporters and were not open to the dialog (Mack and Jack)
- Research questions:
 - 1) How can unlike minded people come to some agreement or consensus about a highly controversial issue like bilingualism?
 - 2) Should we bother?



Bilingualism as misuse of resources

- “Yes, speaking....., you need to learn English.”
 - It would save millions of dollars in printing...
 - “If you cannot read or write English, you should not be able to drive.”
- 

Dialogued with these topics


- “I drive in Japan.....The issue isn't just NOT being able to READ the language or get translation support. It is more about being able to demonstrate to a satisfactory standard, that one has a strong working knowledge of the road rules and is able to safely control a car.....”


Immigration–asylum seekers and workers

- After a long discourse (read p. 9-10), Jack said, “I like simplicity.” Later he closed with, “I need to hit the hay. Post a picture of yourself so I can put a face to that pretty name of yours.”
- Both men did not like being subjected to engaged discussion with a New Zealand woman-- --“Little Miss It All, I am a man who associates with men of all creeds, colors, and backgrounds. We all would like to grab p-----.



Ad hominen attacks

- Attack the people who speak up for bilinguals, immigrants, English learners
 - Attack the bilinguals, immigrants, English learners
- 



Misinformation about bilingual education


- 1) English is being surpassed by other languages in the US
- 2) Previous generations of immigrants learned English faster than newly arriving immigrants
- 3) “total immersion” is the most effective way to learn a language

Misinformation continued

- 4) bilingual education surpasses the timeline of effectiveness at the expense of learning English
- 5) many languages are being taught in bilingual education across the country
- 6) bilingual education means focusing on the students' native tongue and not on English instruction




Misinformation

- 7) bilingual education is more expensive than English education
 - 8) high dropout rates for Hispanic students compared to other demographics shows its ineffectiveness
- 



Misinformation


- 9) inconclusive research about the results of bilingual education is disseminated widely
 - 10) bilingual parents do not support bilingual education because they feel it is more important to have their children master English than remain competent in their mother languages.
- 

Foucault in *Fearless Speech* (2001)

- “parrhesia” dating back to 418 B.C. = the freedom to speak one’s mind
- Can result in truth
- Also can result in ignorant outspokenness



Anti-foreign and foreign language sentiment not new in the U.S

- MLA Report from 2,000 institutions
651 foreign language offerings were terminated between 2013 and 2016
 - French though one of the most prevalent languages in the world lost 12% of its programs in the US
- 

Ill-informed and political preaching

- Read p. 17
- Who has the right to speak?
- We cannot assume that anything positive will come of engaging in exchanges of political debate.
- Shunning, deprecation, shaming, microaggression, macroaggression



In closing:

- “Facebooking in the middle or in the margins is not the best answer to political debate—or any answer in this case.
 - It is a way to reach many people who probably do not truly want to hear what we think or know because we have done the necessary work to have the information and feel it our imperative to speak up.”
- 