

## Race talk in the university classroom: Lessons from Norway for educational developers on race discourse

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**ABSTRACT:** How are issues related to race discussed or silenced in higher education teaching and learning, and what are the implications for educational development? In this study we analyze classroom discourse in three bachelor-level courses in Norway to see how educators and learners take up or avoid difficult topics related to difference and race.

We compare classroom talk from three university courses, from both lectures and seminars. Interactions related to race between students and instructors were analyzed using tools from membership categorization analysis; we attended to the interplay between micro-issues of language interactions and macro-issues of structure, power and agency. Findings demonstrate that in classroom discussions in Norwegian higher education, nationality, religion and culture are often used as a cover to discuss “race” – even in instances where the instructor has thematized race explicitly. In addition, it is clear that at least in classrooms comprising predominantly white European students, whiteness is centered as a taken-for-granted norm against which “Others” are discussed as special cases.

As educational developers, we care not only about whether students are learning, but what and how they are learning, including what and how they learn about issues of societal importance across the curriculum. Further, we have a stake in supporting educators in creating inclusive learning environments: how issues related to race are discussed or avoided has particular implications for the learning experiences of racial/ethnic minority students. We discuss the implications of our findings for instructors as well as educational developers.

This paper will be presented through close readings of excerpts of classroom talk as well as a summary of findings. Our intention is that this act of close reading together, will offer not only information about our project's findings, but will introduce the audience to a different approach to "reading" what happens in learning environments. We hope that this will offer a new "pair of glasses" or a new way of interrogating and making sense of educational discourse practices in their own institutions.