



Podcast #: Language Discrimination in America

Release Date: TBD

Host: Skyla Matteson and Molly Krannitz

Guest: Susan

Description: Listen to Host Skyla and Molly as they discuss with Guest Susan; on her opinion about language discrimination in America and if she has faced any discrimination as a multi-lingual speaker.

Transcript:

- **Skyla Matteson**

Hi, my name is Skyla Matteson. And-

- **Molly Krannitz**

My name is Molly Krannitz. And we are discussing language discrimination within America. And we are joined by Susan.

- **Susan**

Hello, my name is Susan.

- **Skyla Matteson**

Hi, Susan. Where are you from?

- **Susan**

I'm from Toledo, Ohio.

- **Skyla**

And can you give us some languages that you know?

- Susan

I know English and Spanish only. And I'm currently learning Thai.

- Molly

Do you attend to OU?

- Susan

Yes. I am a third-year student at Ohio University.

- Molly

What are you majoring in?

- Susan

My major is integrated media.

- Skyla

How long have you resided in Ohio?

- Susan

I've been living in Ohio for my entire life, for 21 years.

- Skyla

So my first question for you. When you use your native language, do you feel judged by those around you?

- Susan

For Spanish, I would say more in public areas I would feel judged. People tend to, like to make their, oh, how do I say? They like to put in. I would say they just like to-

- Skyla

Have their opinions.

- Susan

-have their opinions. They like to be very outspoken about what languages, should be spoken in public and shouldn't be spoken in public. And since I speak Spanish me with, majorly with my family. So when I'm out with my family, I only speak Spanish. So for them to say you can't speak certain languages.

- Skyla

That's definitely hard to work around-

- Susan

Yeah.

- Skyla

- for sure.

- Molly

Have you had that, where like someone will come up to you and like; basically, verbally assault you, over like speaking Spanish?

- Susan

Oh, multiple times! Many people would be like, "Oh, you shouldn't be speaking or you should speak English." Like, "this is America, you should only speak English stuff like that." Yeah, I've had many encounters, like that.

- Molly

I figured. But I just don't know, like, if there was one that like, stuck out to you like the most. Like when you think about it, like is there, like a specific instance?

- Susan

I feel- there was one time; when it was just me, my mom and my little sister. Um we went out to eat, and our waitress was just, she didn't want to serve us. But not because we weren't speaking to- ordering in English or speaking to her in English, we were. We were just having our own conversations, in Spanish. And she had a problem with it, and did not want to serve us.

- Molly

Have you had, like positive, like interactions with people when they hear you speak your native language?

- Susan

Um, I would say most of the time, nobody cares. I think the-the interactions that stand out to me are usually just negative; but because they just stand out from everyone, just minding their own business or living their life. Some encounters of like, positivity have been when people walk up to us and start speaking Spanish. I mean, it's interesting because like they..they're...they're interested in learning another language. So they want to be interactive with people, who speak Spanish. I think that's very, that's very fun, positive interaction.

- Skyla

One of my first interactions with Susan, was that me and her spoke slight, common intervals, formulations of Spanish and she said I was good at it. But obviously, I'm not good.

- Susan

I always think it's good to encourage people, to like- you can't be like, "Oh, you're really bad at speaking Spanish", because then they won't be encouraged to continue to learn the language.

- Skyla

Third question. How have you handled the language discrimination you may or may not face?

- Susan

Handling it? For the most part, I usually just ignore it. Which probably isn't the best way, to overcome it. But it's just hard to, talk back I guess. Or to, you know, say something because you don't want it to lead to anything else. Like, during the scenarios; I would say I just tried to ignore it and just like, continue on with my day. But, um, if I-I would say that in conversation; I do talk a lot about it, and talk with other people who have experienced it too. And we just, you know, talk about it; and then support others, who do stand up and do fight back, you know?

- Skyla

This is a multi part question. So if faced with language discrimination, and you gave us one example before, Susan, but is there any other examples that you would like to acknowledge? Like, that you may have faced or your family has faced whenever it comes to like language discrimination, prejudices, or even stereotypes whenever it comes to your native language use?

- Mom

I would say more from my mom. My mom is fluent in English, but she just has a very thick accent. So when ordering food, or when, like talking to the bank people. They- I mean. I don't know, maybe it's because I'm so used to her English, but I understand it very well. She, she's very articulate and her accents not heavy. So when people- when I hear people say like, they can't understand her; or that she needs to come back at a later time, or like, all those things. It's just unnecessary. And I'm like, she, she's able to communicate, but people aren't willing to listen. So it's like-

- Skyla

And do you feel like that occurs, like not only with like Spanish? Because I think-

- Susan

Oh, yeah!

- Skyla

-I think like other cultures, whenever it comes to-, like, maybe whenever it comes, like to their enunciation, or just like speaking like, at a faster rate that me and Molly might not be used to that; instead of being like, "Hey, I'm having trouble, like taking my time and like listening." Or maybe like the audio feedback; like what we're listening to you now, in our headphones might not be coming through properly. So like, instead of like taking their time, they're just like, I just don't want to deal with it.

- Susan

Yeah, just like pushing it away. Instead of actually just them being, like, "Oh, can you repeat that?", or listening to what is being said. I think a lot of different languages have that. In fact, in Toledo, there's a wide like, Lebanese community. And they speak Arabic. So their accents, very thick, too; but it's understandable if you listen, and just have a conversation. I think most- most accents are understandable. It's just the matter of taking your time to listen.

- Skyla

I understand what you're talking about. We, in my political theory class, or-or political science, political theory class. We actually talked about the racial contract and I think Epistemology of ignorance. So basically, people who are white identifying and are only like looking through a specific lens, they kind of prefer; like, "oh, like, I'm looking through my binoculars, I only see a white world." And basically, if anything, like disturbs their white world, then there might be like, uproar, or they might just be prejudice. Or just think that, "oh, like, this doesn't belong." And kind of- kind of like how Susan mentioned before, they kind of just like push it out of the way. So like, say with her server, like, since the server did not want to, like provide service; she's probably like thinking, oh, I'll just go to the table that speaks English. Especially with the racial contract, which kind of like goes into the epidemiology of ignorance; that like whenever it comes to like legal documents, like so like my professor, he even stated in the book that we're reading, because he wrote it. He said that whenever it comes to like whiteness, white ideology, it's basically like, "We the People,

you must be like, signed up to be like, I am this white person. I am in this world. And I do not care for anyone outside of the lens that I focus on." Along with other representation of other people of color individuals of color, do you feel like their lack of representation whenever it comes to media, songs, music?

- Susan

Um, well, each culture has their own, like, movie production teams and their own music, culture and stuff like that. So, within-within the cultures, there's not lack of representation; but when it comes to the-the American viewpoint, I would say that there are very few but there it's not nonexistent.

- Skyla

It's existent, but not as heavy as the like the white ideology in Hollywood.

- Susan

Yeah.

- Molly

Is that what you mean?

- Susan

Yeah. But like on the radio, you would hear- you-you start to hear various different languages being put out on the radio. Like, like, like BTS as-

- Skyla

Oh, yeah.

- Susan

-they're, you hear their songs being played, and they're all in Korean. So or when Luis Fonsi came out with his song, it was all in Spanish. Like, you know, all of the-

-Skyla

-incorporation of language.

- Susan

Yeah. Yeah, they, when- when a song starts to become popular,

- Skyla

like it seems to be attracted by-

- Susan

Yeah.

- Skyla

- English speakers.

- Susan

Yeah.

- Skyla

And like, do you think like, whenever that occurs; that they kind of like lessen their language discrimination as kind of like open? Or do you think they still mainly are just like, oh, yeah, this is popular now. But I still discriminate against language, outside of that.

- Susan

I think it's a good way to start integrating different culture. And like, you know, starting off with music, it's something that everybody can connect with music.

- Skyla

Yes.

- Susan

Um, so I think it's, it's nice that, that these different languages are becoming popular within music in other countries.

- Molly

Did you live in Boston?

- Susan

In Boston?

- Molly

Yeah.

- Susan

I was in Boston for like, two years.

- Molly

Okay. So like, we're attitudes in Boston, like towards, like different languages different than they are in like Ohio, like?

- Susan

Then I didn't really think about it. But looking back, it was definitely more diverse. So people didn't pay much mind to it, you know; because it was, there was so much diversity that we weren't the minority you know. So it was, it was more of, I think the difference is the the culture of Boston. It compared to the Midwest, I would say, I found that to be more diverse in

attitudes, because they were more of trying to get places as quickly as possible. And they didn't really care who you were, what you looked like, they just wanted to get to where they were getting to. And they didn't really pay much mind to you. And if you did get in the way, they would say something, they'd be rude. But nothing. I never faced anything really racially in terms of interactions. In Boston, it was more of like, you're in my way. While in the Midwest, it is more it might be the people are more, I would say people in the Midwest are more kind in terms of attitudes. But I do face more racially, racially charged actions and stuff like our attitudes, I would say that's the big differences.

- Skyla

Concerning language discrimination; what outlook, I guess like would be your preferred whenever it comes to like society, or like what would you want people to know, whenever it comes to language discrimination in America?

- Susan

I guess. It's the more you open your mind up to different cultures, and the way they live and act and you know, every- every culture has their own traditions. They have their own holidays, they have their own, like, ways of living. I think the more people open up to those differences, they would be able to have less language discrimination, or just even discrimination in general. Because it's very common in America to be discriminated against. Not every day, but you see it, you hear it. You there-there are things happening that are just being put to the side. And I think the more people grow open-minded to different cultures; the more the more diverse, not not in sense of race, but in sense of like thinking.

- Skyla

Like more aware hear of what's going on besides outside of their own culture.

- Molly

So arraign this, like somewhat back in. Do you think that like, Americans feel a certain way when they are introduced to other languages besides like English because it would be like a cultural insecurity that makes them feel like oh, like, not alienated. But like an outsider makes them threatened. And in this sense of like, this is America. But we have no culture ourselves.

- Susan

I think, to some extent, yes. Like, I think like Skyla said, the the taking of other cultures is more of like, Oh, that's interesting. Let's incorporate it into, like, our culture. Let's try making culture you know. But it's hard. Because it's been years. And there hasn't been like a, like a strong stance on what culture in America is. Because of how many different people live in America and their different cultures within the taking of cultures, you see that a lot. For-For language, I'd say the one that stands out would be how, I don't know. I don't know when it was like two years ago, when like, like, African American slang started becoming popular. And a lot of people started using it. And I mean, within language, I don't know how much of cultural appropriation it is. But that's something that stands out to me, when, when it's like the, the taking of a culture and making it something else. Making it slang for an era. That's one thing that stands out.

- Skyla

Hey, Susan, is there anything else that you'd like to add to the podcast? Informational? Or opinionated, since this is opinion?

- Susan

I don't know if this is important, I mentioned that I'm learning Thai. before and I didn't mention it ever again. But something that I am very passionate about is trying to learn about different cultures and different languages. It's like, I've been learning Thai for over a year now. And I've been very involved with like, the Thai, the Thai Association and with my teacher, she- we've been very close. So she teaches me how to make Thai food, and the different Thai customs. Like you how you why [how you talk to, or address] to every elder and person you say hello to the, the, different terms to address people; and like the taking off your shoes before entering the house, like stuff like that. You slowly start to learn about a different culture. And I don't know, I think learning on language is very interesting. Um, eventually I want to learn Arabic and Tagalog. I think. I don't know. I really like, I really like learning languages and the culture that comes with them.

- Molly

What do you want to speak to like the general population about like language discrimination, and honestly, all over like, cultural racial discrimination as well?

- Susan

This world has so many different languages. It's, it'd be rare to go to a different country and not find a different dialect, or a different accent or a different language. So being, I think I've said this throughout, but being very open to these different cultures; to these different languages is not only like beneficial to the people that you're communicating with. And talking to the countries that you're visiting but to yourself as well, because you're growing as a person; you're being more open to meet more people, and you're growing your communication skills as well. I just think the more open you are, the more you can take away from a lot of things.

- Skyla

Thank you, for joining us today. It really has brought some insight to not only me and Molly, but to the listeners.

- Molly

Yeah, thank you so much for being here. I've honestly really enjoyed listening to you discuss this. Because in a sense, like not necessarily; like ignorant but I don't necessarily know like, I don't know Thai. I don't speak any other language. I know ASL like, in an intermediate way, but this kind of like took me to a sense where like I'm looking at something through someone else's eyes, and like thank you for joining us.

- Susan

Thank you for having me, I had fun.

- Skyla

This was Susan Skyla and Molly. Thank you for listening to Language Discrimination in America. Have a nice night.