

Ask yourself:

- 1) How is language used to reflect or transmit particular characteristics of individuals or groups in terms of ethnicity
- 2) How is language used to shape perspectives and behaviour representing people from different ethnic groups?
 - To determine how ethnic groups are perceived; to highlight or obscure characteristics
 - Purposes and/or reasons (e.g. to promote; to foster solidarity; to reinforce notions of status and prestige)
 - Create, reinforce and/or challenge values and attitudes
 - To maintain, challenge or re-appropriate the status quo (e.g. power structures; social expectations such as stereotypes)

Race: perceived physical similarities and differences that groups and cultures consider socially significant; you generally cannot change your race

Ethnicity: a shared social identity consisting of cultural practices, language, beliefs and history; you have some control over your ethnic affiliation

- Nationalism: there is a close relationship between ethnicity and nationalism, with a persistent idea that nations should be ethnically and linguistically homogeneous. Though this is rarely the case, the ideology of the majority race in a society is often imposed on those who are not from the majority race.

Ethnic identity: allegiance to a group with which one has ancestral links; ethnic group membership can be ascribed by “outsiders” such as the government

In Singapore, citizens are assigned ethnic groupings according to their mother tongue based on the four official languages: English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil. However, Singaporean Chinese may speak Hokkien, Teochew, Cantonese, categorised as varieties of Mandarin and Singaporean Indians may speak other Indian languages such as Malayalam, Bengali, Punjabi.

(Detering et al, 2000) Inverted triangles of ethnic variation: Hypothesised that only during informal situations do ethnic variation tend to appear

- During formal discourse, the correct identification rate for different ethnic groups was only 59%, but informal speech yielded 96%

Racist discourse: a form of discriminatory social practice based on race that manifests itself in text, talk and communication

- 3 ways people construct racist discourse about the “other”:
 - 1) Difference: the “other” is not like “us”
 - 2) Deviance: the “other” behaves in a way “we” feel is amoral
 - 3) Threat: the “other” is dangerous

Linguistic representations of ethnicity:

1) Labels

- Pan-ethnic labels: the grouping of related ethnic groups
 - Can be empowering as politicians can appeal to a large group that comprises many different ethnic and national identities to work together towards a common cause
 - However, pan-ethnic labels also tend to ignore distinctions that make ethnic and national identities meaningful
“Eurasian”, someone of European and Asian lineage, recognised as one out of the four main races in Singapore Chinese, Malay, Indian and Eurasian.
“Asian American”, “African American”, “Indian American”
- Racist labels: negative labels that are offensive in connotation
“Wog” termed as offensive and extremely offensive in the Oxford and Cambridge dictionaries respectively, is used to describe a person who is not white. To the British, it refers to people from the Middle East and South Asia while to Australians, it refers to people from Southern and Eastern Europe, the Mediterranean countries.
- Language reclamation of slur words
“Nigga” the colloquial variation of the slur “nigger” used to refer to African Americans in the slave trade in the past, is now sometimes used casually among African Americans and only considered offensive when said by Americans of other races. Used by blacks, the term may indicate “solidarity or affection”, similar to usage of the words dude and bro which can serve as in-group markers. Outside of a defined social group, its use can be perceived as insulting, provoking, or as unwelcome cultural appropriation.
- Marked labels:
In the 2024 American Presidential Election, presidential candidate Kamala Harris was labelled by the opposition as a DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) candidate. It implied that her gender and African-American ethnicity, rather than her intellect or capabilities of leading a country, was the reason for her success. The term DEI was

initially used to promote increased diversity in recruitment and hiring, referencing the history of gender and ethnic minority discrimination in hiring. However, the term DEI has undergone pejoration due to its increasing controversiality that efforts of inclusion and increasing diversity now give minorities an unfair edge over the majority in employment; that companies now prioritise hiring women and people of colour over people who are better qualified for the job.

- The label “DEI candidate” reduces the power of Kamala Harris by discrediting her and questioning her ability to lead the country, drawing attention to her gender and ethnicity instead

2) Use of pronouns to differentiate between groups

3) Racism reflected in language: “black-sounding names”

The National Bureau of Economic Research conducted a study on name bias, where employers were sent identical resumes differing only in the names used that were distinctly categorised into “white-sounding” or “black-sounding” names and male or female names. The results and analysis revealed that gender differences did not have prominent effects on the callback rates overall, but the racial differences were more pronounced. Similar results were obtained from a 2007 Swedish study between Swedish-sounding names and Arabic or African-sounding names.