

TITLE: Respect the Rank, Not the Person

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Introduction: The United States military is an entity with enormous power and influence on the world stage and its inner workings are often misunderstood by those who do not claim membership to the Armed Forces. As a main focus, language and its relationship to the culture of Engineering Laboratory Technicians aboard a Navy nuclear aircraft carrier were investigated, specifically in relation to rank and respect, identity construction, and acts of resistance.

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to illustrate, through qualitative research, some of the linguistic influences at work in the culture and context of ELT's and uncover some of the consequences that these linguistic forces have on Navy everyday life.

Method: In correspondence with ethnographic research, several casual, in depth interviews were conducted with the informant, mostly through Skype communications. In addition, a visit to the aircraft carrier also provided more detailed information. Field notes on both the interviews and visit were taken, and interviews were recorded with the consent of the informant.

Results: The results of this study reveal that language, identity construction, resistance, and respect in the context of the ELTs coexist and interact in a highly intertwined sociolinguistic relationship that cannot be isolated. Identities are formed in relation to others and themselves, resistance is generally covert rather than overt, and respect for rank is expressed through expressions of familiarity rather than expressions of authority.

Conclusion: Language is an integral part in the functioning of ELT life. It plays a critical role in how respect is or is not demonstrated, lends itself to one the construction and conflict of personal, group, and linguistic identities, and is employed as a means of resisting authority, oppression, and/or inequality.

Recommendations: Future research is needed to investigate these phenomenon more deeply and also to uncover additional factors such as women's roles, sexism, and racism. In addition, life aboard a deployed vessel and the emotional and psychological effects on the sailors and their families should be investigated.

Keywords: Navy, ELT, ethnography, resistance, identity construction, rank, respect, linguistics, sociolinguistics