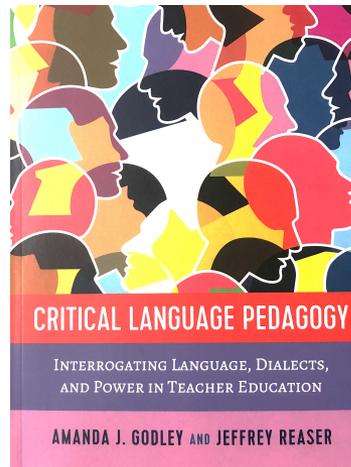


Critical Language Pedagogy: Teaching about Dialect Variation, Identity and Power



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Talk Outline

1. What are current issues surrounding dialect variation in language and literacy K–university education?
2. How does Critical Language Pedagogy (CLP) respond to those issues?
3. What does CLP instruction look like?
4. How did teachers from various backgrounds develop CLP?
5. Designing and implementing CLP in your classroom.

Jamila Lyiscott: 3 Ways to Speak English

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Jamila Lyiscott:

3 ways to speak English

TEDSalon NY2014 · 4:29 · Filmed Feb 2014

 31 subtitle languages 

 View interactive transcript



Lyiscott Discussion

1. How does Lyiscott characterize each of the three ways she speaks English, her relationship to them, and the reasons she chooses to speak each?
2. How does Lyiscott feel when she mixes her “three tongues”?
3. How does Lyiscott redefine what it means to be “articulate” through her TED talk?

Daily Oral Language

“Romeo sneaks into the Capulets party, him and Juliet see each other, and fall in love.”

Miesha: I think you suppose to erase comma after sneaks, and put a semicolon after party and put a comma [after.

Friend: [Why don't you go up there?

Miesha: 'cause man, man this is [boring]. (laughing) I ain't going nowhere.

Teacher: You ain't going nowhere?

Miesha: I ain't going nowhere.

Teacher: You ain't going nowhere. (slowly, as she nods her head)

Miesha: I mean, I in my seat right now, Mrs. West, if I stand up in front of you (rising pitch, pointing finger at T) I will ta-speak proper, whatever you call it. But I'll speak in proper slang right now.

(Godley, Carpenter, Werner, 2007)

Student Voices: African American Language in a Multiethnic High School

Carlos (Latinx)

What happens is, like, when kids are coming—like English learners, since they're around black people sometimes, they learn the slang instead of, like, the English-English."

Miles (Black)

They're my homeboys, most of them. I'm cool with it. I don't think they're trying to steal anything. They're just being themselves because they were born here and raised here, but they were also born and raised in their house, so they can—they get the best of both worlds, I guess.

Paris: When you're not talking Samoan—when you're talking with your friends in English—how would you describe the way you guys talk?

Ela (Samoan)

We talk ghetto a lot. Ghetto—like kids talk. They're like, "Man, he be cursing me—he's talking ghetto."

- Paris, 2009

Student Voices: Online Transnational Talk

Kaiyee: haha i remember Mike told you: You have to speak proper grammar to her.

Ricky: i hate talkin like this

Kaiyee: -.- (nonchalant or matter-of fact)

Ricky: i like talkin like diz

Ricky: diz is way better

Kaiyee: o.o (puzzled)

Kaiyee: dis is more complicated

-Lam, 2009

Research on U.S. K-12 Teachers' Beliefs about Dialect Diversity

Teachers believe standardized English is more grammatical than other dialects.

See Cross, DeVaney, & Jones (2001); Blake & Cutler (2003)

Teachers form negative opinions of students (and their academic potential) when they use vernacular dialects in school.

See Godley, Carpenter & Werner (2007); Dyson & Smitherman (2009)

However, an NCTE study found that teachers who had coursework in sociolinguistics had more positive perspectives on dialect diversity and vernacular dialects.

See Smitherman & Villanueva (2000)

YET Sociolinguistic content under-represented in teacher education programs (even for ELA teachers).

Critical Language Pedagogy

Teaching about language that:

- Is grounded in sociolinguistics
- Draws from Critical Language Awareness (Fairclough, Janks)
- Acknowledges dialect and language diversity
- Questions negative assumptions about dialects and language
- Explores relationships between language, identity, power and privilege
- Includes action for linguistic justice

Critical Language Pedagogy: Course Content and Goals

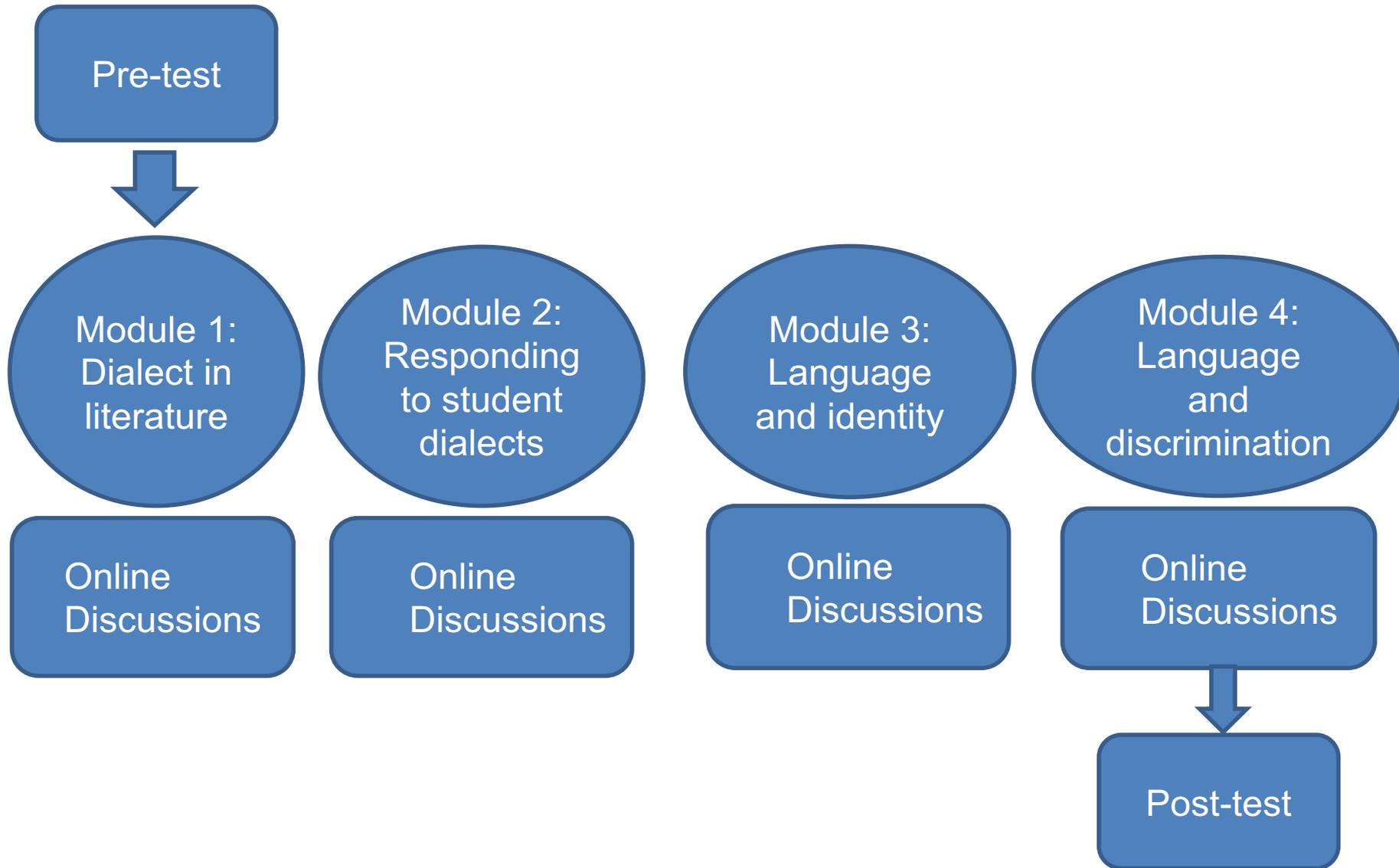
CONTENT

- Sociolinguistics
 - Dialect equality
 - Dialect patterns
 - Dialect fact and fiction
 - Common attitudes toward dialect
 - Authors' portrayals of dialects
- Code-switching, code-meshing, register-shifting
- Language ideologies
- Links between language and identity
- Linguistic profiling

GOALS

- View students' language use as a resource for learning academic forms of English
- Value language diversity
- Use open-ended discussions about language
- Empower students to make informed decisions about when they use different varieties of English for different purposes and situations
- Create opportunities for students to learn "the language of power" without giving up their home languages or language varieties

Online Mini-Course Overview



Module Content and Design

- Teaching scenario
- Original, brief explanations
- Brief readings (Wolfram, Baugh)
- Excerpts from literature (“Listen Mr Oxford Don” John Agard)
- Online videos (student talk, HUD PSA, Classroom Scenarios)
- Individual activities
- Online discussion boards

Sample Curriculum

"Listen Mr Oxford Don" John Agard, 1967

Me not no Oxford don
me a simple immigrant
from Clapham Common
I didn't graduate
I immigrate

But listen Mr Oxford don
I'm a man on de run
and a man on de run
is a dangerous one

I ent have no gun
I ent have no knife
but mugging de Queen's
English

is the story of my life

I don't need no axe
to split/ up yu syntax
I don't need no hammer
to mash/ up yu grammar

I warning you Mr. Oxford don
I'm a wanted man
and a wanted man
is a dangerous one

Dem accuse me of assault
on de Oxford dictionary/

imagine a concise peaceful
man like me/

dem want me to serve time
for inciting rhyme to riot

but I tekking it quiet
down here in Clapham
Common

I'm not violent man Mr. Oxford
don

I only armed wit mih human
breath

but human breath
is a dangerous weapon

So mek dem send one big word
after me

I ent serving no jail sentence
I slashing suffix in self-defence
I bashing future wit present
tense
and if necessary

I making de Queen's English
accessory/ to my offence.

Task

- How would you teach the poem “Listen Mr Oxford Don” to raise issues of:
 - linguistic discrimination
 - English language variation
 - colonization and
 - identity?
- Be as specific as possible. Give detailed descriptions of the activities or questions you would pose and describe verbatim how you would frame the lesson and/or explain potentially unfamiliar concepts (such as linguistic discrimination).

Research Participants

University (pseudonym)	University description ^a	Semester	Course	Number of participants
Great Plains University	Midwestern, Public, High Research, Large	Fall 2014/Fall 2015	Educational Linguistics	68
Tidewater University	Southern, Public, Non-Research, Small	Fall 2014	Language Variation in US Schools	15
Midwest State University	Midwestern, Public, Mid-Research, Medium to Large	Fall 2014	Dialect Seminar	21
Magnolia College	Southern, Public, Mid-Research, Large	Fall 2014	Methods I	19
Western State University	Western, Public, Mid-Research, Medium	Fall 2014/Fall 2015	Language and English Education	50
Southern Tech	Southern, Public, High Research, Large	Fall 2014	Teaching writing	19
Mid-Atlantic State U	Mid-Atlantic, Public, High Research, Large	Fall 2014	Teaching Methods	13
City College	Mid-Atlantic, Private, Non-Research, Small	Fall 2014/Fall 2015	Literacy methods	15
Ravine College	Southern, Private, Non-Research, Small	Fall 2014	Linguistics for Educators	5
Lakeside State	Midwestern, Public, High Research, Large	Spring 2016	Teaching Methods	39
Rust University	Midwestern, Public, High Research, Large	Spring 2016	Teaching Methods in ELA	37
TOTAL				301

Sociolinguistic Knowledge

Content Knowledge

- Dialects are patterned and grammatical
- Dialects are valid
- Language varies by contexts
- Language varies by social/racial community
Language use and identity are strongly related
- Language as basis for judgment/prejudices about other things

Pedagogical Content Knowledge

- Accurate explanations about language and dialects
- Assessing students' language choices
- Developing students' use of SWE
- Considering learning needs and linguistic/regional/SES/racial background of students
- Discussing language variation with students
- Teaching about White Privilege and systems of power

Content Knowledge Results

Content knowledge	Total comments	Rank by number of comments	Rank of accuracy/specificity	Average comment rating
Dialects are valid	307	1	3	2.35
Language varies by context	278	2	1	2.58
Language as basis for judgment	217	3	2	2.48
Dialects are patterned	165	4	5	2.15
Language varies by social category	88	5	4	2.15
Language use and identity are connected	43	6	6	2.14

Pedagogical Content Knowledge Results

Content knowledge	Total comments	Rank by number of comments	Rank of accuracy/specificity	Average comment rating
Considering the learning needs of diverse students	237	1	Tied-4	3.06
Discussing language variation with students	222	2	2	3.19
Developing students' use of academic English	106	3	Tied-4	3.06
Accurate information/terminology	94	4	1	3.20
Addressing students' language choices	66	5	3	3.11
Teaching about White Privilege and systems of power	65	6	6	2.97

From Tolerance to Social Justice

“Today, I gave a mini-lesson on empathy and the human experience and how that relates to reading texts and emotionally investing in characters. ...**Teaching empathy and understanding alongside of a dialect related lesson could be beneficial. However, it would be essential to avoid a seemingly oppressive ‘pity’ when discussing difference.**”

(Monica, Module 1)

“It’s important that students from any background become aware that there is not one correct dialect or way of speaking. **I think that the more people who are educated to understand that dialects are all legitimate varieties of a language, the fewer instances of discrimination based on dialect will occur.**”

(Hailey, Module 4)

How do teachers' regional, linguistic, and racial identities shape their views of dialects and CLP?

Regionality

- Teachers at the Southern schools talked about linguistic discrimination and race more than those at the Midwestern schools ($p < 0.001$)
- **Why?**
 - Southern cities, universities and programs were more diverse
 - Teachers had personal experience with discrimination against Southern dialects.
 - However, “Southern, but not too Southern” view prevailed.

Multilingual Teachers

Lin (Born and raised in China, moved to us when 16):

Even though we use our hometown dialects in our everyday speeches, no one would ever use dialectic vocabulary, slang language, or abbreviated words in our writing or in a professional setting. It was sort of like a common sense, so the schools never even bother to bring up this topic.

Veronica (Mexican descent, born and raised in US):

I found that being from Northern Mexico I had a different accent and even a different dialect from the people speaking around me. This felt rather embarrassing at times because I thought I "knew Spanish." The difference in my dialect was never more apparent than when a seven or eight year old girl told me that I "talked funny" and "sounded like I was from the ranch or something." As soon as she said this, I felt myself becoming more tentative to speak because I didn't want to sound funny in front of other people. I never thought of myself sounding like I was from a ranch (in the United States I would maybe compare it to sounding like a hick or a redneck) and for that reason I was slightly offended. It was not until I was talking to a friend who told me that everyone from northern Mexico sounded like that, that I was able to feel more comfortable with speaking again.

Teachers of Color: Personal Experiences

I agree that these types of lesson can definitely be utilized in secondary classes. I think that “code switching” is getting a bad name sometimes. We all do it throughout the day with different people. I know that I don’t talk to my parents the same way that I talk to my sisters. I would think that students already know to use this skill without really paying attention to it. I understand the hesitation or fear of placing SE as the most powerful form of English, but what is the alternative? I visualize CEOs taking lessons in Chicano/Appalachian/African American Vernacular English. That would be the ideal, for everyone to share the burden of responsibility of understanding one another. But I don’t see that happening. So the alternative is to play the game and learn the language of those in power.

Practical, Additivist Positions

For me, the most difficult task will be finding a way to validate students' dialects and still teach Standard English. I did not realize the importance of validating how they speak. I would never put a student down for his dialect, but I did not realize that it is a valuable conversation. Although I understand the findings that support that neither the dialects of the more affluent nor underprivileged is correct, I am still charged with teaching Standard English because it is what's accepted in the marketplace.

White, US-born Teachers: Colormute Talk

"The end result should be to give students the perspective that dialect is a two-way street and perhaps the characters would have thought the students in this class speak differently as well, but neither of the language variations are stupid or wrong."

"We all code-switch in our everyday lives... I was able to make it through my undergrad program doing just that."

"I would want to teach students that discrimination and profiling happens to all people, no matter their race."

Findings: Module 4 Instructional Strategies

Coding Category	Frequency in Discussion Posts
Learning Goal: Awareness of Discrimination	44%
Learning Goal: Celebrate Difference	29%
Learning Goal: Analyze Author's Message or Style	13%
Learning Goal: Work Against Discrimination (Social Justice)	12%
Avoided Question about Identities	85%
Students' Identities Shape Instruction	15%
Teachers' Identities Shape Instruction	5%

Summary of Findings

- The teachers had more robust sociolinguistic CK than existing studies suggest.
- Geographic, racial & linguistic identities shaped teachers' discussions and attitudes.
- White teachers were more comfortable discussing dialects in literature than in current society, and regional variation than ethnic/racial variation.
- Teachers focused on:
 - "Honoring" vernacular dialects
 - Tolerance rather than change
 - Literature rather than writing
- Teachers avoided:
 - Power and privilege
 - Language and identity
 - White privilege and institutional racism until linguistic profiling module.
- Teachers, even when they voiced critical views about language or had strong CK, were unsure how to implement them in their classrooms.

Instructional Implications

- **Teacher education:**
 - Greater focus on pedagogical applications.
 - Discuss teachers' and students' linguistic privileges and positionalities.
- **Acknowledge dialects/varieties in languages.**
- **Use current issues and events, in addition to literature, to teach language varieties.**
- **Move beyond "celebrating difference" to discussions of power.**
- **Recognize teachers and students as having diverse language practices, beliefs & goals for language learning.**



Thank You!

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