



CULTIVATING CRITICAL LANGUAGE AWARENESS IN THE WRITING CLASSROOM

Shawna Shapiro



Cultivating Critical Language Awareness in the Writing Classroom

This book introduces Critical Language Awareness (CLA) Pedagogy as a robust and research-grounded framework to engage and support students in critical examinations of language, identity, privilege, and power.

Starting with an accessible introduction to CLA, chapters cover key topics—including World Englishes, linguistic prejudice, news media literacy, inclusive language practices, and more—in an inviting and thought-provoking way to promote reflection and analysis. Part I provides an overview of the foundations of CLA pedagogy, while Part II highlights four instructional pathways for CLA pedagogy: Sociolinguistics, Critical Academic Literacies, Media/Discourse Analysis, and Communicating Across Difference. Each chapter is structured around Essential Questions and Transferrable Skills, and includes three thematic learning sequences. Part III offers tools and guidance for tailoring CLA pedagogy to the reader's own teaching context and to students' individual needs.

The volume's wealth of resources and activities are a pedagogical toolkit for supporting and embracing linguistic diversity in the classroom. The cohesive framework, concrete strategies, engaging activities, and guiding questions in this volume allow readers to come away with not only a deeper understanding of CLA, but also a clear roadmap for implementing CLA in the classroom.

Synthesizing relevant research from educational linguistics and writing studies, this book is ideal for courses in English/literacy education, college composition, L2 writing instruction, and educational linguistics.

Shawna Shapiro is Associate Professor of Writing and Linguistics at Middlebury College, USA.

Support Material

Some of the tools discussed and displayed in this book are also available for download on the Routledge website.

You can access these downloads by visiting www.routledge.com/ 9780367767402. Click on the tab that says "Support Material" and select the files to view or download to your computer.

The resources from the book that are also available online include:

- Access to an external online Hub (http://clacollective.org/), with additional classroom materials and other resources
- Examples of syllabi from courses in the book
- A selection of activities, tasks, and assignments from each chapter
- Samples of student work

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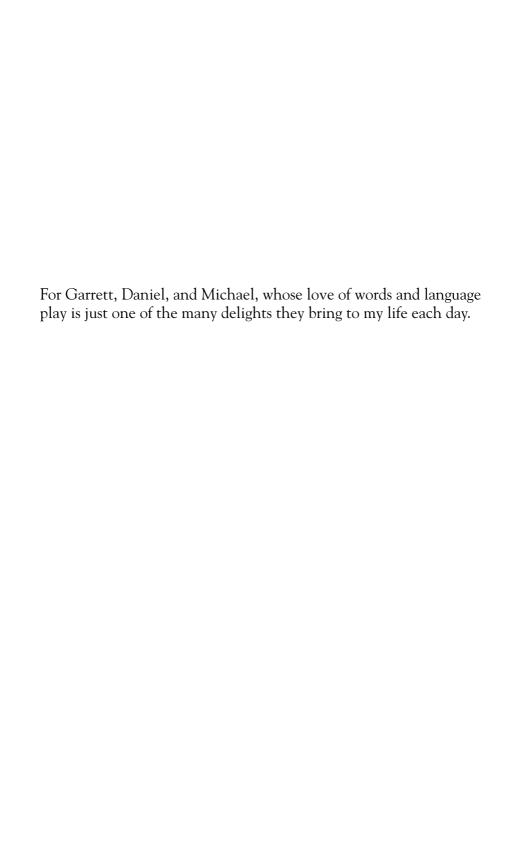




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Author Biography

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Part I

Foundations of CLA Pedagogy



1

Introduction

Why Do We Need CLA Pedagogy?

It seems that everywhere one looks these days within writing/literacy education, teachers are talking about language difference. Whether we are referring to English Learners with immigrant and refugee backgrounds, students of color who use multiple dialects, international students who are multilingual/L2¹ writers, or millennials engaging with social media, conversations about the writing classroom and curriculum are infused with a growing awareness of linguistic complexity. Now, more than ever, educators are eager for instructional strategies that celebrate and build on students' linguistic resources. We do not just want to affirm the value of linguistic diversity, however; we also want to promote our students' rhetorical agency—to empower them to use language for a variety of academic, professional, civic, and personal purposes.

Yet many teachers struggle to enact this two-pronged vision of linguistic affirmation and rhetorical agency. On the one hand, we tend to be pragmatists: Most of us believe that practical, relevant writing instruction can expand students' access to power and increase their opportunities at school, at work, and in their local and global (and even digital) communities. We want our students to come away from our classes with an expanded set of rhetorical knowledge and strategies—a linguistic "utility belt" that is fuller than it was when they entered our classrooms.

On the other hand, many educators are becoming more aware of the dangers of a purely "utilitarian" approach to writing instruction. We know—or are learning—that education often (re)creates an uneven linguistic playing field, where some forms of speaking and writing are valued more than others. We want to level that playing field wherever possible. We know that writing instruction has traditionally upheld the linguistic status quo, which is disempowering to particular groups of students, including many multilingual and multidialectal writers. Under the guise of "basic skills" and "standards," we

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have seen—and still see—practices that are ineffective and unethical—from remedial curricula that aim to "fix" student writers (Rose, 1985; Shapiro, 2011) to tests and other assessments that are punitive and/or discriminatory (Inoue, 2015; Poe & Elliot, 2019). Thus, in attempting to prepare students to write for the world that is, we may miss opportunities to co-create the world as we want it to be—a place where language difference is seen and treated as an asset, rather than a liability.

This tension between **pragmatism** (i.e., what students need for today) and **progressivism** (i.e., what the world needs for a more just tomorrow) puts many educators in an ideological bind. Again and again, I have heard both pre-service and practicing teachers ask some version of the following question: How can we teach writing in a way that reflects our commitment to linguistic diversity and social justice, while also preparing student writers for success in school and beyond?

This book is designed to answer that very question. Or, more precisely, this book provides many answers to that question, all of which are undergirded by a common theoretical framework: Critical Language Awareness (CLA). There are a number of ways to define CLA and the pedagogies that are informed by this theoretical framework, as we will discuss in Chapters 2 and 3. But for the sake of this introductory chapter, here is a working definition:

CLA Pedagogy is an approach to language and literacy education that focuses on the intersections of language, identity, power, and privilege, with the goal of promoting self-reflection, social justice, and rhetorical agency among student writers.

To help illustrate why we need CLA pedagogy, I present three common scenarios:

- Instructor A teaches a required writing course for first-years at her university. When she surveys her incoming students about their goals as writers, she encounters a wide range of answers: Some want to be able to write for their intended programs of study, which include everything from art history to zoology. Others want to be prepared to communicate for professional purposes. A few are engaged in local activism and hope to use writing to increase the visibility and impact of that work. What can this instructor realistically offer to students with so many different literacy goals—particularly when her own background is in English literature?
- 2 Instructors B and C co-teach an Advanced Placement (or International Baccalaureate) English class at a highly tracked secondary

school. After attending a workshop on inclusive pedagogy, they are committed to redesigning their course to increase representation from minority groups, including students who use English as an additional language (EAL) and students of color, as well as students from low-er-income households. Their first step was to revise their reading list to include more writers from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. But where might they go from there? And how can they ensure that students from underrepresented groups feel that they truly belong in this class?

3 Instructor D teaches a developmental/transitional writing class that has a mix of international and domestic students, most of whom learned English as an additional language. Many of his students seem resentful and unmotivated—in part because they were required to take his course based on standardized test scores rather than choosing the course for themselves. After attending a workshop on translingual writing, Instructor D added a "code-meshing" assignment that invites students to include other languages or dialects in their academic writing. But student responses to the assignment range from mild interest to apathy to anxiety. How can this instructor set up and scaffold this assignment, so that students see it as valuable? What can he offer to those who do not see themselves as multilingual or multidialectal (i.e., who do not think they have multiple "codes" to begin with)? And how else might he make his course engaging and relevant to students from so many different backgrounds?

All of these hypothetical instructors are committed to student-centered teaching that responds to the needs, goals, and interests of a diverse student population. All of them want to promote rhetorical agency through their writing curricula and instruction. All of them seek an approach to writing pedagogy that is pragmatic but also progressive.

Is Pragmatism the Problem?

Yet much of the recent scholarship in writing/literacy studies—particularly around language difference—seems to suggest that pragmatism is itself a problem. Often, teachers are given the impression that their desire to meet students' immediate, practical needs is somehow in conflict with their commitment to promoting more socially and linguistically just schools and societies. One place we can observe this perceived tension is in a 2019 address given at the Conference for College Communication and Composition

(CCCC)—the largest annual gathering of postsecondary writing teachers in the United States. The speaker was Asao Inoue, an advocate of anti-racist pedagogy and policy, who was that year's conference chair. Inoue's talk discussed how writing instructors—White instructors, in particular—have been teaching and assessing writing in ways that perpetuate "White language supremacy"—i.e., a linguistic status quo that advantages students already familiar with dominant (traditionally White) norms and standards. This dynamic, Inoue explained, causes real harm to students from less privileged backgrounds, including many students of color. Responding to the pragmatic argument that teaching standardized English is "just about preparation for the future, just about good critical thinking and communicating," he says:

We must stop justifying White standards of writing as a necessary evil. Evil in any form is never necessary. We must stop saying that we have to teach this dominant English because it's what students need to succeed tomorrow. They only need it because we keep teaching it!

Though Inoue does not rule out the possibility of including standardized English somewhere within an anti-racist writing curriculum, he does make clear that evaluating students on conformity with "White standards of writing" perpetuates racial inequality. And since most teachers consider it best practice to assess students on what they learn in class, rather than on what they already know and can do, it seems that Inoue is calling for, at minimum, a marked decrease in emphasis on standardized English.⁵

Inoue's address was intentionally provocative. And provocation is valuable—we all need to be shaken up once in a while! But some attendees, myself included, felt that the talk set up an overly simplistic binary in which practicality is at odds with the aims of social justice. And indeed, if pragmatism is interpreted as a complete acceptance of the status quo, then it does seem logical that a purely pragmatic orientation is problematic. After all, one of the fundamental tenets of anti-racism is that if we—White folks, in particular—are not working to dismantle systems of racial inequality, then we are in effect maintaining and even strengthening those systems (e.g., Kendi, 2019; see also the work of Angela Davis).

Clearly, Inoue is pushing us to ask ourselves: *Do we want to be part of the problem or part of the solution to racial inequality?* This question is also at the heart of a CCCC document released in July 2020 entitled "This Ain't Another Statement! This is a DEMAND for Black Linguistic Justice!" which is the latest among the organization's position statements on "language issues" (I'll say more on these statements later in this chapter). The statement calls on

teachers to "acknowledge and celebrate Black students' use of Black Language in all its linguistic and cultural glory." It also exhorts teachers to "stop using academic language and standard English as the accepted communicative norm!" and to "STOP telling Black students that they have to 'learn standard English to be successful because that's just the way it is in the real world."

Both Inoue's talk and the "Black Linguistic Justice" statement argue persuasively that simply teaching for the linguistic status quo is not the answer to racial inequality in education. But this leaves many writing teachers wondering: What do we do, instead? How do we prepare student writers for the world of today while working to promote a better, more just world for tomorrow?

A Pedagogical Conundrum

Thus, as many teachers commit to being part of the solution to racism and other forms of oppression, we receive the message that a focus on academic norms and/or standardized English—particularly in terms of assessment—is antithetical to that aim. This leaves us in a pedagogical conundrum that goes something like this:

If academic/standardized language perpetuates White supremacy, then should I avoid teaching it altogether?

If I do not focus on academic/standardized language in my writing classes, then what should I be teaching instead? Is my main goal simply to validate what students already know and do as language users?

And if that is my goal, how do I justify it to my students, who have been told that my class is designed to help them write for academic or professional purposes? Was that false advertising?

Also, how does a shift away from academic/standardized language *inside* my classroom actually change things in the world, including the academic world, *outside*?

Maybe I'm in the wrong profession?! I really want to do what is best for students—particularly for those from less privileged backgrounds. But I'm not even sure what that is anymore!

The actual conversations, of course, are more lengthy and nuanced. But I hope this line of reasoning illustrates the *very real tension* many educators are facing as they wrestle with what it means to teach writing in both pragmatic and progressive ways. This tension has only grown stronger in recent

years, as public conversations about racial and economic justice have increased in so many of our communities (e.g., Associated Press, 2020).

Looking for Both/And

Most anti-racist writing/literacy scholars will—when pressed—admit that the norms of academic/standardized language still hold power, and that ignoring them completely would be unhelpful to students. Inoue, for example, has said in other venues (e.g., Flaherty, 2019) that his classes do include some attention to dominant norms and standards—if nothing else, as a point of contrast with the linguistic norms and practices that are already familiar to many of his students. And of course, many of the scholars calling for resistance to academic norms and linguistic standards are doing so in writing that seems to conform quite closely to those norms and standards—although to be fair, there are some exceptions to this trend (e.g., Smitherman, 1986; Villanueva, 1993; Young, 2010).8

Clearly, discussions of linguistic and racial justice in writing/literacy studies must be centered not on *whether* to be pragmatic or progressive, but on *how* to integrate the two into our curricula and instruction. The trouble is that by the time we get to this point in the conversation (or presentation, or article, or workshop), there is usually little time or space left for discussing what this integration looks like in practice. One scholar who has argued for and exemplified approaches that are both pragmatic and progressive is Lisa Delpit. Delpit (1988, 2006) argues that students from less privileged backgrounds—in particular, working-class, multidialectal students of color—need both linguistic affirmation *and* explicit instruction in academic/standardized language, or what she calls the "codes of power":

I am certain that if we are truly to effect societal change, we cannot do so from the bottom up, but we must push and agitate from the top down. And in the meantime, we must take the responsibility to *teach*, to provide for students who do not already possess them, the additional codes of power.

(p.40)

Yet despite this nuanced stance, Delpit has been criticized by some scholars (e.g., Canagarajah, 2013b; Flores & Rosa, 2015; Young, 2014) for emphasizing linguistic "appropriateness," an assimilationist stance, over linguistic affirmation and justice. Canagarajah (2013b) writes that scholars like Delpit embody a "pragmatist position" because they "acknowledge the power

differences in the language of academic writing but don't argue for change" (p. 110). While I do believe some of Delpit's work could be enriched with a more critical view of language difference and variation, I mention her here as an illustration of how pervasive this perceived tension is between pragmatism and progressivism, among scholars talking about language difference and academic literacy.

We see this same tension as well within scholarship promoting a translingual orientation to literacy, which has dominated much of the discussion about multilingual/L2 writers over the past decade among U.S. composition scholars. Some brief historical context, for those new to this area of scholarship: Although the label "translingual" has been used for decades to refer to authors who write in multiple language and/or codes (e.g., Kellman, 2005), it was taken up in the early 2010s among writing studies scholars—particularly among compositionists working in U.S. postsecondary education.

Translingualism as a theory about language tends to highlight hybridity, multiplicity, and porousness, as well as intercultural and transnational aspects of language (e.g., Canagarajah, 2013a; Lu & Horner, 2016). Translingual scholars contrast this rich, multi-faceted conception of language with the "monolingual ideology" prevalent in most writing classrooms and curricula, where teachers often try to "fix" language—i.e., to treat it as static, as well as to "remediate" language that is deemed inappropriate for school settings. (For an excellent overview of the strands within monolingual ideology, see Watson & Shapiro, 2018).

A translingual approach, similar to a CLA approach, treats language difference as an asset (Britton & Lorimer Leonard, 2020; Guerra, 2016) —a theoretical orientation central to other frameworks as well, such as linguistically responsive instruction (e.g., Lucas et al., 2008) and teaching for linguistic justice (e.g., Baker-Bell, 2020; Schreiber et al., forthcoming). One pedagogical strategy translingual scholars have put forward as a way of enacting this asset orientation is to incorporate course materials and/or assignments that use "code-meshing"—i.e., that integrate multiple languages and/or codes within a single piece of writing (e.g., Young & Martinez, 2011). 10 Although the meaning of the term "translingual pedagogy" has evolved—or rather, expanded—significantly since early usage (see, for example, Horner et al., 2011 vs. Lu & Horner, 2013, 2016), code-meshing still dominates many of the case studies of translingual pedagogy. And indeed, as I will explain in later chapters of this volume, using texts and assignments that mix codes and styles is one of the many ways we can cultivate CLA in our writing classrooms!

Yet code-meshing alone feels to some teachers more like a minor pedagogical tweak than a transformation. Many of us conclude that this strategy is necessary but not sufficient in preparing student writers to achieve their academic, professional, and civic goals, especially since most of their readers—including most instructors in other disciplines—will not have been exposed to translingual theories about language. Moreover, despite its commitment to seeing language in complex, nuanced ways, translingual scholarship tends to say little about how to work with academic norms and linguistic standards in the classroom, beyond recognizing that those norms and standards are often leveraged punitively against students. Thus, conversations about translingual approaches to writing often end up in the same pedagogical conundrum outlined earlier—with teachers wondering how to be both pragmatic and progressive in their work with student writers from a variety of linguistic backgrounds. 11

One way some translingual scholars have tried to resolve this tension is by focusing on *student agency*. Watson and Shapiro (2018), for example, suggest that teachers committed to linguistic diversity need to "contextualize[e] the oppressive aspects of [Standardized English] so that students are armed, just as we are, with the knowledge needed to **make decisions about how, whether, and when to push against standardized norms**" (p. 11 of pdf, emphasis mine). Similarly, Schreiber and Watson (2018) propose that our job as writing teachers must be to "help[] students master grammatical and genre conventions even as we critique them" (p. 96). Without both elements (mastery and critique), they point out, agency is impossible, since students "who don't yet understand the social and racial hierarchies that inform language standards" (p. 96) cannot make informed rhetorical choices.

With this focus on informed decision-making, translingual scholarship begins to echo earlier scholarship on "rhetorical grammar" (e.g., Kolln & Gray, 2013; Micciche, 2004), which tends to emphasize writerly decision-making—rather than linguistic absolutes—when it comes to academic/standardized language (See also Lu & Horner, 2013; Guerra, 2016; Lee, 2016; Shapiro et al., 2016). If students *want* to be able to write in ways that conform to academic norms and linguistic standards, then it would seem that part of our job as progressive, student-centered writing teachers is to create opportunities for them to do so.

Thus, we begin to see a pattern: A scholarly conversation that promotes radical thinking about language often becomes much more pragmatic when it turns to questions about writing pedagogy (See Cox & Watson, 2020; Gere et al., 2021; Ruecker & Shapiro, 2020 for more on this dynamic). And sadly,

most of these discussions leave unanswered the most important question: What do we need to teach—and how—in order to prepare students to make these agentive choices as writers, and to do so in keeping with our progressive orientation to language difference?

Looking Back

It may be comforting (or perhaps disheartening) to realize that U.S. writing teachers have been wrestling with this question for decades. Perhaps the most prominent example of this is in the ongoing conversation about Students' Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL), which has become its own line of scholarship (e.g., Perryman-Clarke et al., 2014), and which I am only discussing briefly here for historical context. The first SRTOL resolution, ¹² approved by members of the (U.S.-based) National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)¹³ in 1974, articulates a familiar argument: It opens by denouncing the predominantly negative attitude toward "nonstandard dialects" and "the prejudicial labeling of students that resulted from this view." It goes on to affirm "students' right to their own language—to the dialect that expresses their family and community identity, the idiolect that expresses their unique personal identity." Yet a few lines down, the resolution also affirms that teachers have a responsibility to "provide the opportunity for students to learn the conventions of what has been called written edited American English." Once again, the key question is not whether to teach "written edited American English" but how to do so in a linguistically affirming way. Unfortunately, this resolution leaves that "how" question, well, unresolved. 14

This same line of argument is evident in a number of other NCTE/CCC position statements ¹⁵: The 1988 "Guideline on the National Language Policy," responding to public debates about "official English" and English-only policies, affirms the linguistic reality that the United States is and has been a "multilingual society." But it also recognizes "the historical reality that . . . English has become the language of wider communication," and therefore advocates for writing/literacy instruction that reflects both realities. The 1998 "Statement on Ebonics," responding to the controversial debate about whether and how to integrate use of Black, vernacular English (sometimes called "Ebonics") into literacy instruction for African American students, calls for "training to provide . . . adequate knowledge about Ebonics" among teachers and other professionals. But it also says educators need to "build on existing knowledge about Ebonics to help students to expand their command of the Language of Wider Communication ('standard English')."

Likewise, the "Statement on Second Language Writing and Multilingual Writers," first approved in 2001, aims to "make visible otherwise underutilized linguistic and literacy resources that enrich academic life and should be valued and supported" and to "promote social justice for all multilingual members of the academic community." But there is little in the statement that would suggest shifting focus away from English altogether—or away from an emphasis on academic/standardized language within the writing curriculum. ¹⁶

All of these statements—and these are just a sampling!—reaffirm the value of linguistic diversity and call for professional training that furthers our understanding of the linguistic resources students bring with them to the writing classroom. All of them also suggest that there is a place for academic/standardized language within a curriculum that is both progressive and pragmatic. But none of them offers much guidance on how to enact this "both/and" approach in practice. ¹⁷

Moving Forward: CLA as "Both/And" Pedagogy

Of course, ideological binaries and theory-practice gaps are almost cliché in educational research, including in writing/literacy studies. Many scholars have themselves called for a richer, more nuanced pedagogical conversation around language difference, suggesting we should be building alliances rather than drawing ideological lines (e.g., Cox & Watson, 2020; Howell et al., 2020; Silva & Wang, 2020; Tardy, 2017). As Schreiber and Watson (2018) argue, teachers need room to "experiment" with linguistically affirming pedagogies "without fear of being labeled as uninformed and uncritical" (p. 96).

But this fear is real and understandable: Teachers have been told that the stakes for this work are high—that linguistic injustice and other forms of oppression have a tangible, material impact on our students. We want to be part of the solution, and we certainly don't want to contribute to the problem. Thus, one concern about the lack of guidance and frameworks for "both/and" writing pedagogy is that it can cause *pedagogical paralysis*. Moreover, it can lead to pendulum swings in curriculum and instruction, as has happened with other issues, such as the "reading wars" debate around best practices for early literacy (Lemann, 1997; Pearson, 2004) which has been flaring up again in recent years (Hood, 2019).

But the biggest danger, in my view, is that teachers may give up altogether on reforming their pedagogies. They may simply revert back to what they

already know. Or, more likely, teachers may tinker at the edges of their curriculum without truly changing the core of what they do. Instructor A (from the scenarios above) will likely design her course around literary analysis, as this is her area of expertise. She may add a new assignment—a blog post, perhaps, or a multimodal project—and will hope that this addition is a meaningful gesture toward relevance and inclusion. Instructors B and C, though proud about their newly diversified reading list, will probably re-use most of the same activities and assignments that work with their more privileged students. But they may not adapt their instruction in ways that are supportive and affirming of students from multilingual and multidialectal backgrounds, and as a result, those students may question whether they belong in the course—and they may not be prepared for the high-stakes exam at the end of the term. Instructor D will enjoy reading a new batch of "code-meshed" essays, but may wonder: Are the students simply performing for me? Is this just a new version of "Please the Teacher," with a multilingual twist? He may not see much of a change in student affect and motivation, either.

All of these instructors will continue to ask themselves whether they are in fact promoting *rhetorical agency* among their students—especially among those from less privileged backgrounds. Moreover, all of them will also probably continue evaluating writing as they always have, which may not be in line with their values of equity and inclusion. In Chapter 9, we will consider how CLA can shape our feedback and evaluation practices, by the way!

I have moved very quickly here in mapping out the central issues and questions at the core of this book. I will return to many of these topics later, and I will also suggest readings and other media that can allow readers to take a deeper dive. But what I hope I have demonstrated is that the perceived tension between pragmatism and progressivism in the teaching of writing—particularly in regard to academic norms and standardized English—is not new and has never been resolved.

And yet it **cannot be ignored**. As writing teachers, we must find ways to work creatively with this tension, in order to enact our commitment to linguistic diversity, social justice, and rhetorical effectiveness, for and with all of the students in our classrooms. Critical Language Awareness (CLA) is the best framework I have found for doing just that. To this end, I offer below an expanded version of the definition of CLA Pedagogy provided earlier:

CLA pedagogy is an approach to language and literacy education that focuses on the intersections of language, identity, power, and privilege, with the goal of promoting self-reflection, social justice, and rhetorical agency. A CLA approach to writing instruction aims to promote a more

just future, while also preparing students for the (often unjust) present. CLA pedagogy does not ignore the power of academic norms and other linguistic standards (i.e., the status quo), but aims to demystify, critique, and—at times—resist those norms and standards.

CLA Pedagogy is grounded theoretically in what applied linguist Alistair Pennycook (1997) calls **critical pragmatism**. ¹⁸ In contrast with "vulgar pragmatism," which claims to be politically neutral and prioritizes efficiency and utilitarianism, critical pragmatism remains open to the possibility of changing the status quo, while still taking seriously students' needs and expectations for using language/literacy within that status quo. Although the term "critical pragmatism" was never taken up widely in linguistics or writing/literacy studies, there have been other scholarly attempts to reconcile criticality and pragmatism—particularly among practitioners working multilingual/L2 writers. The most notable of these is Critical English for Academic Purposes (e.g., Benesch, 1996, 2001), which I view as an early iteration of CLA pedagogy (for more on critical pragmatism in relation to writing pedagogy, see Ruecker & Shapiro, 2020).

A CLA approach to writing and literacy instruction engages students from a variety of language backgrounds in rich conversations about how language shapes them and how they can shape language (e.g., Clark et al., 1990, 1991; Fairclough, 1992/2014). CLA Pedagogy can include some of the strategies mentioned here, such as incorporating readings or other media from multilingual or multidialectal writers, or inviting students to "mesh" multiple languages/codes in their own writing. But it can involve so much more: Investigating the many varieties of English around the world, analyzing the language of news media, studying how linguistic prejudice plays out in cartoons and courtrooms, and even debating the role that academic/standardized language plays—or should play—in our own programs and institutions.

CLA is informed by cutting-edge research in linguistics, education, rhetoric/composition, and literacy studies. Even prior to the emergence of CLA in the early 1990s, which we will trace in Chapter 2, applied linguistics research demonstrated that language awareness (LA), defined as "explicit knowledge about language, and conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching and language use" (ALA, n.d.), has a positive impact on students' engagement, growth, and confidence as readers, writers, and orators (e.g., Cots, 2013; Hawkins, 1999; James & Garrett, 1992). Likewise, teachers who receive LA training as part of their professional development report feeling more prepared to teach about language and literacy in ways that are pedagogically effective (Andrews, 2007; Bunch, 2013; Wright & Bolitho, 1993).

When LA instruction includes links to identity, power, and privilege—i.e., a CLA approach—teachers tend to come away with a heightened curiosity about language in society, greater appreciation for cultural and linguistic diversity, and a deeper understanding of how their work as language/literacy teachers is tied to social justice (e.g., Endo, 2015; Godley et al., 2015; Metz, 2018a; Shi & Rolstad, 2020). These outcomes, in turn, reinvigorate many teachers' sense of efficacy, so that they are better prepared to promote equity and inclusion through their curricula and classroom practices (e.g., Baker-Bell, 2020; Bunch, 2013; Haddix, 2008). When it comes to academic language/literacy, CLA opens up conversations that neither deny the social power of linguistic standards nor overlook the real harm that is often done in the name of upholding those standards (Gere et al., 2021; Godley & Reaser, 2018; Weaver, 2019).

Student responses to CLA Pedagogy are equally promising: After engaging with a CLA-oriented curriculum—in particular, one that focuses on linguistic variation, as we will explore in Chapter 4—students from linguistic minority backgrounds (i.e., who use a language or dialect other than standardized English at home) report a greater sense of linguistic and cultural pride (e.g., Baker-Bell, 2020; Metz, 2018b; Reaser et al., 2017). Students from more privileged backgrounds, moreover, deepen their understanding of how their attitudes and actions can contribute to social (in)justice (e.g., Abe & Shapiro, 2021; Devereaux & Palmer, 2019; Weaver, 2019).

Although many of the recent case studies of CLA Pedagogy in the U.S. have come from English language arts or writing/composition classrooms, as well as English teacher education programs, CLA has also informed the work of many ESOL/English Learner and world/heritage language teachers (see Achugar, 2015; Devereaux & Palmer, 2019; Fairclough, 1992/2014, for a representative sampling). Courses built around CLA may focus primarily on academic literacy (or literacies—see Chapter 5), but CLA can also be integrated into professional or technical writing courses, writing for public/civic audiences, and creative or expressivist writing curricula. CLA Pedagogy has been taken up among educators in a wide variety of other disciplines, too, including literary studies, film and media studies, history, theater, psychology, business, political science, environmental studies, and medicine! (I am currently developing some bibliographies of this research, which will be available with the e-resources to this volume). Moreover, this approach has been adapted for all levels of instruction, from primary grades through graduate school and community-based education programs.

Perhaps what excites me most about CLA pedagogy, though, is its transformative potential.

A CLA approach does not simply try to *add on* to our already crammed curricula. Rather, it invites us to *open up* our hearts and minds, our course materials and assignments, our conversations with students, and even our feedback and assessment practices. When we foreground issues of language, identity, privilege, and power in both the content and the delivery of our curriculum, we begin to see and do our work differently. This includes working with and through the tensions around linguistic norms and standards—not just in academia, but everywhere. (If you don't believe that linguistic norms exist outside of education, ask a typical teenager about whether to end a text message with a period. You will likely get an earful!). As we will explore in future chapters, the tendency to prescribe what people should do with language is present in every linguistic community. Why? Because we define our relationships, our communities, and our very identities through language. Is it any wonder, then, that discussions about linguistic norms and standards become so fraught?

Looking Ahead

To conclude this chapter—and to pique your interest in the rest of the book—I wish to return once more to the three teaching scenarios mentioned near the beginning. Instructor A, who is overwhelmed by the variety of goals and needs expressed by her first-year college students—including intended majors that range, literally, from A to Z!—has several options. Rather than reverting back to literary analysis as the default or trying to choose a few disciplines to focus on, she could design her course, or a unit of her course, around the theme of "academic disciplines as linguistic communities" (see Chapter 5). Her students could learn about Writing in the Disciplines (WID) research, and even use empirical methods themselves (e.g., ethnographic observation, instructor or student interviews) to investigate the language norms within particular disciplines or programs of study. Ultimately, each student would become an academic "cultural informant" for their peers, building and sharing valuable institutional and rhetorical knowledge (see Benesch, 2001; Johns, 1997; Shapiro, 2009, for more on how to scaffold these kinds of investigations). Alternatively, or in addition, Instructor A's class could focus on linguistic analysis of news media (see Chapter 6), which students could apply to coverage of social issues they care deeply about.

Instructors B and C, who want to diversify and support the students in their AP/IB course, might decide to rebuild their curriculum around sociolinguistics themes (e.g., Baker-Bell, 2020; Devereaux & Palmer, 2019; Reaser et al., 2017). Students could document linguistic diversity at their school and in the local community by conducting peer-to-peer surveys, using linguistic

atlases and other online resources, and even analyzing spoken or written exchanges on social media (see Chapters 4, 6, and 7). Their students could also use sociolinguistics concepts as a lens to analyze film or other media, including multidialectal literature (also Chapter 4). They may even organize a school "teach-in" or other event about resisting linguistic prejudice, in which students from marginalized groups would have the opportunity to lead, rather than follow. Critical news media literacy (Chapter 6) may also work well with these students.

Instructor D, whose developmental writing students seem resentful and unmotivated, may keep the code-meshing assignment. But he could make it one option in a unit using "writing-as-(re)design" (see Chapter 7), in which students write for a variety of audiences, using their close analysis skills to make informed rhetorical decisions. He may also incorporate an "academic informant" project similar to Instructor A, and/or engage the topic of "linguistic pluralism in the academy" (see Chapter 5), in order to open up critical conversations about the impact of his program/institution's policies on students (see also Chapter 10). Students could even be invited to research, write, and/or speak about their experiences, sharing their work—if they choose—with key stakeholders and advocating for more equitable alternatives, drawing on anti-racist, translingual, and second language writing scholarship (e.g., Benesch, 2001; Inoue, 2015; Fahim et al., 2020).

These curricular changes would, of course, not be quick or easy to implement. Each instructor would likely need to start small, perhaps with one new or revised unit or assignment, and build up to a larger transformation of their courses. But the result would be well worth it. Why? Because when they engage with literacy through a CLA lens, students learn to pay closer and more meaningful attention to language—what it looks like, what role it plays in our lives and work, and how we might use it in powerful and agentive ways. I can't think of a more relevant and energizing vision for our work as teachers of writing! I hope you, dear reader, are ready to explore this vision with me! Below is a description of each of the remaining chapters of the book, so you can map out your journey.

Chapter 2 offers a historical and conceptual overview of CLA as a movement within linguistics and literacy studies. We discuss how CLA was shaped by two phenomena: The "Knowledge about Language" movement in the United Kingdom—particularly in relation to the U.K.'s National Curriculum in 1988—and the "critical turn" in academia. We see through this story of CLA that this approach to writing/literacy education can be both versatile and subversive! I then describe how CLA Pedagogy has been taken up in some other educational settings since the early 1990s, and I consider some

possible reasons for why it has been less prominent in the U.S. The chapter concludes with an overview of some key terms that are central to CLA and will be used throughout the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 3 delves further into how and why CLA works as an approach to writing/literacy pedagogy. We first unpack the definition of CLA, focusing on how CLA pedagogy promotes three overarching and interrelated goals for student writers: self-reflection, social justice, and rhetorical agency. I explain how foregrounding these three goals can help to bridge the perceived divide between pragmatism and progressivism, as we discussed earlier. I then present six core principles for CLA Pedagogy, curated from my review of educational scholarship, as well as my own teaching practice:

CLA Pedagogy

- 1 Includes students from all language backgrounds
- 2 Uses language as a bridge into social justice learning
- 3 Engages minds, hearts, and bodies
- 4 Links awareness to action
- Works with tensions around linguistic norms and standards
- 6 Builds on best practices for writing/literacy instruction

In Part II (Chapters 4–7), I present four pathways for CLA pedagogy: Sociolinguistics, Critical Academic Literacies, Media/Discourse Analysis, and Communicating Across Difference. Each pathway chapter begins with an introduction to the topic, followed by a list of Essential Questions and Transferrable Skills applicable to that pathway and a paragraph summary of each of the three units in each pathway (See Figure 1.1). The highlights from each unit are also summarized in an "At-a-Glance" chart near the beginning of each chapter.

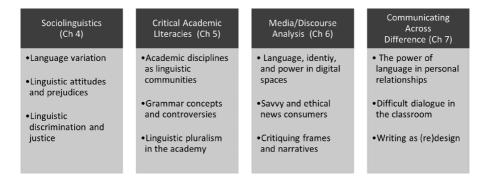


Figure 1.1 Overview of the Four Pathways Chapters

The presentation of each unit has been structured as a learning sequence that includes ideas for various aspects of instruction: Tapping into students' prior knowledge and experiences, exploring the topic at hand, deepening and/or personalizing learning, and demonstrating learning. Links to online readings and other media (e.g., news articles, blog posts, TED talks) are woven throughout the sequences, as are instructions and handouts from many of my favorite activities and assignments! These learning sequences are intended to be pedagogical menus, rather than recipes. In other words, educators can and probably should make adaptations to the sequence, to make it a good fit with their own pedagogical goals and constraints.

Part III (Chapters 8–10) offers guidance to support educators in that adaptation. Chapter 8 discusses how teachers can design CLA-oriented units and courses tailored to their pedagogical goals and contexts. We talk through strategies for needs assessment as part of curriculum design, and I describe how I have used those strategies in creating four CLA-oriented courses that have distinct goals, student populations, and other features. We then consider briefly how CLA overlaps with two sets of standards used widely among U.S. writing teachers: the Common Core Standards for English/Language Arts (CCSS ELA)²⁰ and the Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing (FSPW). We also consider ways to ensure that our courses and units are accessible and inclusive, drawing on Universal Design for Learning (UDL). The chapter concludes with a discussion of how I took these elements into account in the "Language and Social Justice" unit I co-taught for 7th through 10th-graders.

Chapter 9 examines how we can infuse CLA throughout our classroom instruction—no matter what topics we are including in our curricula! We address common questions such as:

- How can we implement CLA Pedagogy in teaching situations with constrained curricula or regressive policies?
- How might CLA inform how we structure and scaffold class discussion, and how we manage the difficult dynamics that can emerge when we talk about controversial or sensitive issues?
- What does a CLA approach suggest for how we structure and support academic reading, oral presentations, and peer review?
- How might CLA shape our feedback, assessment, and evaluation practices—including how we attend to issues of language and style?

This chapter also draws on some of my other research into student conceptions of inclusivity (e.g., Shapiro, 2020).

Chapter 10 considers how we can apply CLA to our educational work beyond the classroom, as well as our personal and civic lives. We briefly review research on how to assess students' development of CLA, beyond their growth as writers. We then discuss how CLA can inform our curricular and co-curricular offerings, our faculty development work, and our institutional work in relation to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). The final section of the chapter—"CLA for Life!"—highlights some of the ways CLA might be relevant to our lives beyond our professional work. Throughout the chapter, I highlight topics that can be explored in greater depth, including through online gatherings and discussions at the Hub.

As we explore CLA pedagogy together, I hope you will enjoy both the journey and the destination!

Notes

- 1 Applied linguists use the shorthand "L2" to refer to the use of an additional language. It is important to note that for many students, English may be a third, fourth, etc. language—or they might have grown up in a bilingual household with two or more "L1s." As you will see throughout this book, linguistic labels and categories are almost always complicated! ©
- 2 The term "code" is used in linguistics as a neutral way to refer to a consistent pattern of variation. A set of "codes" could refer to a group of languages, a group of dialects within the same language, or a set of context-based patterns (e.g., styles, registers, genres) within a language or dialect. Again (see footnote 1), linguistic boundaries are always complicated—and often political. We'll learn more about this in Chapters 2 and 4.
- 3 The full text of Inoue's (2019) address can be found at https://library.ncte.org/journals/CCC/issues/v71-2/30427. It was also published in College Composition and Communication, 71(2), 352–369.
- 4 I use the word "standardized" rather than "standard" throughout this chapter, as a way of reminding readers that standardization is something we do to language, including in and through literacy education (e.g., Godley et al., 2015). Standardized language, in other words, has quite a different origin story from most other types of linguistic variation. I'll discuss this a bit more in Chapter 2.
- 5 Inoue (2019) has in fact argued persuasively for "labor-based grading" as a more equitable alternative to standards-based assessment. I will discuss how this approach fits within CLA Pedagogy in Chapter 9.
- 6 The online Hub for this volume—a link to which is available at the e-resources for this volume—includes links to other resources that explain anti-racism and anti-racist pedagogy, for those newer to these topics.
- 7 The statement can be accessed at https://cccc.ncte.org/cccc/demand-for-black-linguistic-justice

- 8 The authors of the "Black Linguistic Justice" statement do this somewhat as well, explaining that they "intentionally created a fluid text from our multiple voices rather than a singularly voiced, standardized, white document."
- 9 It is also worth noting that discussions about translingual scholarship have at times been contentious: Translingual scholars tend to frame their work as more progressive than that of second-language writing scholars; the latter, in return, tend to accuse translingual scholars of being vague about pedagogical implications and overly idealistic in their approach to language difference. This debate will start to sound quite familiar as we move through this chapter. See Silva and Wang (2020) for more.
- 10 The term "code-meshing" has itself been a bit controversial: Many translingual scholars suggest that code-meshing is distinct from "code-switching," which they often (mis)characterize as the use of separate codes for distinct situations—what Guerra (2016) and others call "code segregation." The controversy stems from the fact that linguists have traditionally defined code-switching as the mixing of codes in a single communicative situation—i.e., what translingual scholars call "code-meshing." If nothing else, I hope this example helps to illustrate once again that language matters—in particular, to scholars!
- 11 It is important to note that many scholars identify as *both* anti-racist and translingual (e.g., Howell et al., 2020; Condon & Young, 2017). I do not mean to suggest here that they are completely separate lines of inquiry.
- 12 This statement and accompanying material can be accessed at https://ncte.org/statement/righttoownlanguage/.
- 13 NCTE is the professional organization with which CCCC is affiliated. A CCCC Executive Committee had adopted an earlier version of the SRTOL statement in 1972, but it took two years for the larger NCTE umbrella organization to agree on a statement. For more on the rationale and history of the statement, visit https://cdn.ncte.org/nctefiles/groups/cccc/newsrtol.pdf
- 14 For more on how the conversation has evolved since the 1970s, see the most recent version of the SRTOL statement from CCCC (note above), which includes an excellent annotated bibliography.
- 15 These and a list of other statements focused on "language issues" can be found at https://cccc.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions.
- 16 As is often the case in these statements, this one also calls for increased "awareness" about language and language acquisition, including "understanding the evolution of English—its fluidity and its global variation" (i.e., World Englishes).
- 17 U.S. teachers are not alone, of course, in trying to reconcile progressive values with pragmatic approaches. This tension has informed much of the scholarship on critical approaches to literacy in other countries as well (e.g., Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Janks, 2000; Lillis, 2003).
- 18 Pennycook did not invent these terms, but rather, borrowed them from the political scientist and teacher educator Cleo Cherryholmes. However, Pennycook brought the term into discussions of language/literacy education specifically. See Ruecker and Shapiro (2020) for more on the history and applications of this term.

- 19 Course descriptions and past syllabi for all of my Middlebury classes can be found at http://sites.middlebury.edu/shapiro/teaching-2/
- 20 www.corestandards.org.
- 21 http://wpacouncil.org/aws/CWPA/pt/sd/news_article/242845/_PARENT/layout_details/false.

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