



Theories of Writing: A Guide for Writing Tutors and Mentors

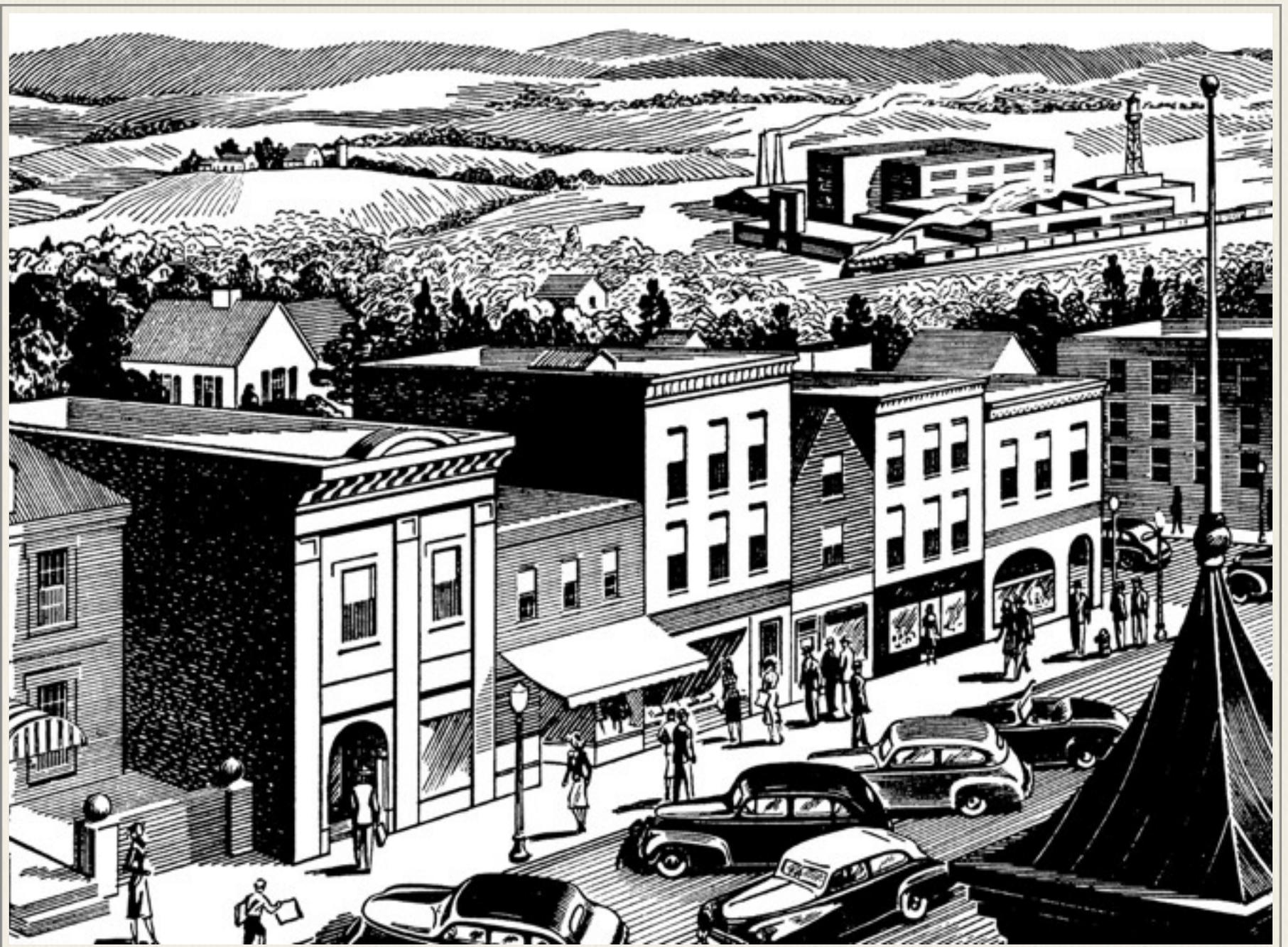


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Forward

Hannah Duran and Shane LeVigne

Theories of Writing: A Guide for Writing Tutors and Mentors is a collection of chapters that clarifies various perspectives of and pedagogical approaches to tutoring and writing mentorship. It is designed to inform writing teachers, mentors, and tutors about the relevant issues and conversations taking place in the field of writing studies outlining theories of L2 instruction, writing process, and language diversity. All eight contributors demonstrate not only an awareness of but a personal investment and expertise in the topics outlined in each chapter. It is our hope that readers interested in discussions surrounding writing mentorship and tutoring, or writing instruction in general, will not only find this book to be a fascinating and detailed source of current rhetoric in composition, but also a catalyst for assuming a metacognitive lens in evaluating writing practices in academia.

The collection is broken up into eight chapters:

- The first chapter analyzes how trauma affects the cognitive process of writing.
- Chapter two explores African American Vernacular English and brings to light longstanding language ideologies and hierarchies within academia.

- The idea of language hierarchies within academia is furthered in the third chapter in which the author examines the reality of linguistic imperialism in writing centers and the cause and effects of the inherited practice.
- Chapter four switches gears in evaluating the function of the workshop model in both creative and academic writing settings while arguing for its implementation in courses beyond the field of English.
- In chapter five, the author ventures into L2 acquisition scholarship by exploring the history and nature of the Interaction Hypothesis and demonstrating how it can be recontextualized within writing tutoring scenarios.
- Chapter six analyzes methods to improve student learning outcomes through the development of agency and the multiplicity of identity.
- Chapter seven returns to the subject of language ideology in analyzing Standard English and its place within pedagogy and writing.
- Finally in chapter eight, readers are introduced to the concept of code-meshing and whether or not the language practice should be integrated within the writing classroom.

Prefaces precede each author's work and orient the chapter within the personal and professional experience that undergirds the production of each piece. Readers of this collection can benefit from the interpersonal connection established by each preface and how it creates a lens that highlights metacognitive writing practice within a diverse academic community. Further, each preface is designed to invite not only the critique of this academic rhetoric as expertise, but to offer a cathartic reading experience for the reader as fellow writer, learner, and explorer.



How Trauma Affects Writing as a Cognitive Process

Amber Tovar

Preface

I felt compelled to write about how trauma affects writing as a cognitive process after briefly reading that trauma did in fact correlate to writing processes. Later, I found that this is because writing is a cognitive process in that it takes attention, recall of memory, and even creativity to do. As I researched more on the topic I began to make personal connections to my topic and became that much more invested in the ways trauma affects cognition and writing's role in these processes. I want this paper to give insight to the ways writing can be fractured or torn just as much as a muscle in the body—trauma is not only detrimental to the mind or body, but extends itself outwards and can disrupt the ways we perform in school.

When anyone who would identify as a writer thinks about what writing is, we can imagine learning how to hold a pencil for the first time, putting the sharpened, thin graphite to the white paper, and writing ‘A, B, C...’ over and over again until the letters of the alphabet become words, and words become the first real piece we are proud of. As we age and learn from experience, it becomes apparent that our memories and what we learn from observing other people's lives become inspiration for ideas about what we create in our writing. Ongoing, it can be assumed that when analyzing writing processes, attention, memory, and even creativity are aspects of the writing process that are fundamental, yet not always acknowledged. This may be because we are not totally aware that we use these parts of our brain since they are a part of the brain's cognitive process. This being said, writing can be seen as a cognitive process, however, a massive disruption such as trauma can be detrimental to the ways that these aspects of the cognitive process work. Charles Bazerman and Howard Tinberg in “Naming Classroom Expectations,” explain that “writing is a full act of the mind, drawing on the full resources of our nervous system, formulating communicative im-

pulses into thoughts and words, and transcribing through the work of the fingers” (Bazerman Tinberg 74). To further refine exactly how trauma affects the writing process, I will elucidate how Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a commonly developed disorder after experiencing a traumatic event and the ways PTSD affects academic performance.

It can be confusing to comprehend exactly what cognition is since it is an intuitive process and quite literally something one is born with. According to Cambridge Cognition, cognition, “in essence, (is) the ability to perceive and react, process and understand, store and retrieve information, make decisions and produce appropriate responses.” Cambridge Cognition continues on to explain that cognition “...underpins many daily activities, in health and disease, across the age span” . This means that cognition affects the way writers conjure up concepts or ideas to write about as well as how they remember, understand, and analyze them. If writers generally write from experience (their own or other's), this means that any sort of disruption in someone's cognition may affect their writing process. But what sort of disruption is signifi-

cant enough to really affect someone's cognitive process?

There are two types of trauma, according to Elyssa Barbash's article, "Different Types of Trauma: Small 't' vs Large 'T,'" that appears in "Psychology Today", small "t" and large "T" trauma. Trauma is defined as a "deeply disturbing event that infringes upon an individual's sense of control and may reduce their capacity to integrate the situation or circumstances into their current reality" ("Psychology Today"). The distinction between small "t" and large "T" trauma is that while small "t" trauma is still damaging to a person's emotional functionality, large "T" trauma leaves a person powerless in their environment due to an experience or event that can be deemed as "extraordinary and significant," such as sexual assault, war, or life-threatening experiences ("Psychology Today"). Although it has not been said whether a small "t" trauma could affect cognition compared to the way a large "T" trauma would, small "t" trauma, such as being betrayed in a relationship or moving to a new place, could arguably inspire ideas for writing. Some examples of large "T" trauma that have been proven in research to significantly

affect cognitive ability are sexual assault, witnessing or experiencing violence in a community, and war ("Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration").

An example of how large "T" trauma can affect a person's cognitive ability is seen in the following study about violence in a community. William Saltzman and a group of researchers explored the ways in which group therapy would benefit the academic performance of young students who have personally experienced or witnessed violence in their community, and as a result developed (PTSD). "The hallmark symptoms of PTSD involve alterations to cognitive processes such as memory, attention, planning, and problem solving, underscoring the detrimental impact that negative emotionality has on cognitive functioning" (Hayes 1).

Out of the twenty-six total group participants in the study, "14 had initial levels of PTSD in the severe to very severe range [and] twelve group members PTSD symptom(s)' scores fell in the moderate range" (Saltzman 296). A specific

“...example of the way in which traumatic exposure can interfere with academic performance is provided by a group member named Hector... Hector was standing next to a friend when the friend was killed in a drive-by shooting... Following his friend's murder, Hector's grades dropped sharply and his level of participation in school activities declined” (Saltzman 300).

Why was there such a dramatic decrease in Hector's participation and performance in school after his friend's death? As a result of the violence he witnessed, Hector developed PTSD which has a direct correlation to cognition. In a study done by Jasmeet P. Hayes, Michael B. VanElzakker, and Lisa M. Shin it's been discovered that “the hallmark symptoms of PTSD involve alterations to cognitive processes such as memory [and] attention” (Hayes 2). In addition, the same study goes on to explain that the three cluster types of PTSD symptoms are B, C, and D. Each of these clusters exhibit specific traits.

Symptom cluster B involves persistent and unwanted recollections of the

traumatic event, intrusive memories of the event, and dissociative flashbacks. As a result, the individual re-experiences the event despite being removed from the traumatic situation and context. Cluster C involves persistent avoidance of people, places, and activities that serve as reminders of the traumatic event. Those who fall into this category experience emotional numbing, difficulty experiencing a full range of emotions, and diminished expectations of one's ability to lead a long, fulfilling life. Finally, symptom cluster D involves symptoms of hyperarousal, including difficulty with sleep, irritability and anger, poor concentration, hypervigilance, and exaggerated startle response (Hayes 2).

The effects of PTSD on the cognitive processes on a person immediately beg the question of what that means for writing processes as it is a cognitive process.

Writers essentially write from their memory, meaning their recall of any other memory other than the trauma can be difficult because their cognitive ability is literally altered to the trauma they have endured. When we think about what this means for writers and

their writing process, it is subjective to what aspect of the writing process we are discussing. Cognitive and personalized aspects of the writing process are synonymous—when I share, workshop and edit my writing, there are characteristics that are obviously mine. These attributes are essentially creative moves I decide to incorporate into my writing, illuminating the way in which writing is also an artistic, creative form. My recall of memories, people, places, and even my surroundings, as well as how long it takes me to write and articulate my ideas while writing, illuminate the cognitive perspective of a writing process. It needs repeating that this entire writing process is subjective to the individual and what trauma they have endured as well as whether the individual has developed Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

It is discernible after copious different types of studies about writing, cognition, and trauma that there is some form of effect on writing and even schooling after exposure to trauma. It is interesting to consider how many institutions of schooling and their educators, if at all, acknowledge writing as a cognitive process as well as consider how events outside of the classroom may affect their student's academic per-

formance. When a star athlete rips a muscle or breaks a wrist, their performance is handicapped and preceded expectations of them are typically excused. Why can this not be the same for students and writers when analyzing the ways trauma affects cognition and therefore writing processes?

When conflict in my personal life has affected my academic performance in college, I have found when there is clear communication between professors, me, and even peers about needing extended deadlines or extra help with assignments, there is a sufficient amount of weight lifted off my shoulders. This consideration, however, only illuminates how institutions of education, higher or mandatory, need to provide and foster an environment where means of trauma intervention and counseling are provided for the sake of the well-being and academic performance of students.

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About the Author



Amber Tovar graduated high school in Orange County, CA and is currently an undergraduate student at California State University, Chico. Amber is an English Education major with a minor in Creative Writing working towards getting her degree in teaching. Her goals for the future include actively trying to get published in any local papers or websites and to move up in scale as she gets older as well as to maintain her academic performance in college. In her free time, Amber enjoys hanging out with friends and going on unplanned trips to San Francisco on the weekends.



Adopting Pluralism and Code-Switching: The Better Choices for Students that Speak African American English Vernacular

Adrianna Wiley

Preface

I decided to write this piece due to the fact that I believe it's about time that our society as a whole recognizes that African American English Vernacular is actually more complex than "Standard English," and that those who speak AAVE are just as proper and valid as those who speak Standard English. Being that I am mixed with African American and Caucasian, I sadly grew up associating myself with being Caucasian, rather than both ethnicities. It's important to know that it was my decision to make that choice, and that choice was decided when I was only a child, because whenever I would speak AAVE, I would get ridiculed by my peers. It wasn't until I got into college when I started accepting and embracing my African American side and realizing that the way I speak is not lesser to than how my peers speak. I want this piece to bring awareness to mentors, teachers and anyone who will instill knowledge to pupils, in order to let their students who speak AAVE, know that their language shouldn't be suppressed and is authentic to the fullest.

When we hear the word “Ebonics,” I believe most of us think of African Americans and Ebonics being a term that is associated with how we speak. Well, I have got some progressive news; Ebonics is no longer the correct term. African American Language, also known as African American Vernacular English, “combines an English vocabulary (the words used) with African grammar (the way words are ordered and conjugated) and phonology (the way words are pronounced)” (Cunningham 88). Many in our society view African American Vernacular English as bad, broken, slang, etc.; however, AAVE is neither ‘good’ nor ‘bad’ English, because linguistically speaking, AAVE is not English. AAVE is its own language and should be viewed as such.

Now, what does AAVE have to do with teaching writing and how does it relate? Well, many scholars find that teachers in particular are more likely to correct errors related to AAVE; therefore, this means that not only teachers, but our society as a whole needs to understand that AAVE is different from and not lesser than “Standard” American English. AAVE is a valid and independent form of oral and written communication, which needs to be addressed in

terms of language difference, code-switching/pluralism and expected practices from students, rather than their ‘misuse’ of English.

Before diving deeper into African American Vernacular English, it is noteworthy to mention how the language came to be and how others viewed the language not only in the past, but in the present as well. The notion of, ‘wiping out’ AAVE has always been an option to few, and the issue may never come to rest. In Clara Franklin Alexander’s, article, she claims that AAVE, “evolved the same way other dialects of English did, which is the result of culture, the environment, the needs of the group, and contact with other languages” (571). Way before Alexander wrote her article in 1980, there had been various myths about AAVE that degrade and demote the language. Some of these myths include:

- Before being brought to the Western hemisphere, Blacks spoke “savage gibberish.”
- Due to physical and cognitive deficiencies, Blacks could not learn English properly.

- Children’s ability to learn is retarded because of the use of a non-legitimate linguistic system such as Black English. (572)

While Jennifer M. Cunningham—associate professor of English—expresses that AAVE, “developed from a mixture of languages used by people of different linguistic backgrounds in order to communicate and is a separate language made up of mostly English-language vocabulary words and West African grammatical and phonological rules”(571); however, the origin of the language is a subject that remains to be controversial.

After reading those terrifying myths that Alexander presented, I think there is no wonder as to why many African Americans believe that the way they sometimes speak is incorrect. Even though this article was written so long ago, many of these myths and stereotypes still persist today. For example, in a chapter of Arnetha Ball’s Ebook, an African American man named William Raspberry wrote a patronizing and biased article that opposes the use of AAVE in school (33). Raspberry went far enough to make up a dialogue—which to Ball—only portrays

Raspberry as having the inability to comprehend AAVE (33). It is already bad enough that our society perpetuates these condescending myths, but it is even worse when a black man himself is reinforcing these stereotypes against his own people. African Americans have been conditioned into thinking that we should not embrace our culture or our language, even though speakers of AAVE are no more disadvantaged than speakers of any other dialect. In fact, former tenured university professor, Rosina Lippi-Green, implemented interviews in a section of her article where opinions are given on AAVE. Toni Morrison, author, poet, and Nobel Prize winner was one of those that was interviewed and mentioned how it would be, “The worst of all possible things that could happen would be to lose that language (9).” She also, in a way, covertly mentions that AAVE is more complex than Standard English. She comments on how it would be a terrible thing for someone with five different present tenses to go to school and be faced with books that are less than their own language (9). The complexity of AAVE is only one of the key reasons as to why it should be embraced and not hidden away. It is

time for African American Language to finally get the recognition it deserves.

Teachers and mentors have a choice in the response we want to give to our students about their ‘non-standard’ usage of AAVE. We can adopt eradicationism, asserting the superiority of Standard English and trying to persuade students to completely abandon AAVE entirely. Or, we can advocate for pluralism, recognizing the communicative and cultural equality of all language choices and respecting students’ right to make their own choices on which language they prefer to use. Or lastly, we can encourage code-switching (aka bidialectalism), vouching that AAVE is effective in its own context, but our students will have to master Standard English for the purpose of upward socioeconomic flexibility. According to Rebecca Moore Howard, Professor of Writing and Rhetoric at Syracuse University, notes that specifically in college composition classrooms, many teachers’ standard response is code-switching; however, I will be contending for both pluralism and code-switching. (265)

As mentors, on our way to possibly being future teachers, I believe that the most important thing to remember

about AAVE and pluralism, is that it functions as more than just a tool for communication and we must see culture and language as a mirror image of individual and group identity/solidarity. We should take on the stance of pluralism and code-switching curriculum. As mentors and teachers, we must continuously be ‘woke’ as our generation would say, and reconsider our attitudes about other languages and vernaculars by becoming open-minded toward various ethnicities, cultures and language communities that our students may obtain. Consequently, some teacher’s attitudes about other vernaculars can cloud their first impressions about how intelligent a student is most likely to be or not. This can cause a chain reaction of negative changes toward how they treat their students, which is why it is so important for us to alter our attitudes about students’ vernaculars. We affect how our students feel about themselves as learners, students and overall, people.

Cunningham does a beautiful job in explaining some of the grammatical and phonological rules of African American Vernacular English. AAVE combines an English vocabulary with an African grammar and phonology.

Therefore, linguistically speaking, AAVE, like other languages and dialects, follows rules and is correct in specific contexts. A common grammatical feature among AAVE is the negative concord, also known as double negatives (90). For example, the grammatically correct, "I ain't got no time." Which, in Standard American English means, "I don't have any time." Many languages such as French, Spanish and Portuguese include double negatives, so why should AAVE be penalized for doing the same? A phonological sound found among AAVE is the replacement of the th sound. The th sound is uncommon and a difficult sound to produce if it's not a part of someone's native language. For example, in French, they replace the th with a /z/. So, zis, zat, zese and zose. While with AAVE, they replace the th sound with a /d/ or /t/. Whether spoken or written, these minor linguistic explanations only emphasize the fact that AAVE is as valid as any other language. Nevertheless, the question is: how can us as future teachers and mentors address students about a balance of the use of AAVE in and outside of the classroom, without making our students feel as though their language is less superior to Standard English?

Greene and Walker's article acknowledges that, "it is the task of the teacher to impress upon students that a negotiation of Standard and Black English is not an attack on their [B]lackness, but an attempt at helping them to broaden their linguistic skills and function within society" (436) The problem some can see about that statement is that it can send the same message as eradicationism: only the standard counts because non-standard languages are lesser. We absolutely do not want our students to feel like their language is inferior, which is why it is important to merge code-switching and pluralism. We do not want our students to broaden their linguistic skills just so that they can function in society, we want them to feel like AAVE is an important fundamental of American linguistic life. In order to combat our students' negative mindsets about their language and themselves as writers, we should encourage the blending of informal and academic language in writing assignments. This method can lead to a more compelling discourse between teachers/mentors and students. I believe that Greene and Walker say it best when they refer to wanting to make our students feel like it is Them and Us, not Them wanting to feel welcomed to Us.

African American Vernacular English has been tucked away for far too long. It is time that we acknowledge AAVE and other dialects that our future students may speak. As mentors, it would be a good idea to assess our students by looking at their writing samples and analyze them for the linguistic features, that way we can familiarize ourselves with the kind of language our students will be using in their writing. But in order to do this, we should first foster linguistic training that would introduce a crucial study of language in classrooms and supply students with the utensils to deliberately pick and choose between code-switching, Standard English and pluralism.

Taking on the code-switching and pluralism curriculum by welcoming their home languages, cultures and identities into the classroom will make your students feel respected and it will overall help you to better connect with your students. African American Vernacular English and Standard American English differ in various ways, but when we focus on the differences, you and your students will be better at understanding, acquiring and switching between both languages. AAVE has its own set of grammatical, phonological

and morphological rules and our society is more than capable of perceiving and appreciating the legitimacy of the language.

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About the Author



Adrianna Wiley is a 20-year-old undergraduate at California State University, Chico working toward her BA in English Education, minor in Linguistics and TE-SOL certificate. Her passion to teach was electrified by her father who taught History as a high school teacher and her aunt who was a preschool teacher for over 20 years. Adrianna currently works on campus at the English and History Department, while also being treasurer of the Student California Teachers Association. While born and raised in southern California, she hopes to either teach abroad or reside in northern California to teach high school English.



A Writing Mentor's Deviation from Linguistic Imperialism

Italia Cardenas

Preface

I deemed it necessary to be represent non native English speakers in the United States and how sometimes visits to the writing center can hinder a non native speaker's writing process rather than pave way for more progress. In the following paper, I provide a personal anecdote about my experience and struggle as a non native speaker. I briefly discuss the nature and history of linguistic imperialism in the United States and pivot to the modes in which writing centers likely, unintentionally, practice linguistic imperialism. I argue that the main concern within writing centers is the criticism based off the mentor's own experience rather than the students'.

The idea that writing mentors must “attend carefully to where the writer’s situation might diverge from the tutor’s writing experience” (Janetta and Fitzgerald 16) suggests that mentors not only look beyond grammar and punctuation errors, but also base their conceptualization of the writer’s content off the writer’s experiences. Writers’ experiences vary based on cultural upbringing, language variation amongst educational and home environments, and similar situations that might diverge a student from producing a well developed “proper English” writing piece. I grew up in the Southeast Los Angeles, amongst a predominantly hispanic population. English is my second language and although I learned about “proper English” in the classroom the practice did not carryover to the way I communicated with my peers nor my Spanish speaking parents. In community college I declared myself an English major because although my “proper English” was not perfect, my thrill for writing was evermore. I struggled. I was encouraged to write more generic themes, my ideas were always too far out of my reach, the tutors would tell me. If I focused on a simpler idea, that would give them more time to correct my grammar. I gave up pur-

suing English as a major four years ago after harsh criticism from the college’s writing center. Filled with self doubt, my writing process reached a stump. I never visited the writing center again. Today I am attending a four year university and although I have not mastered all the rules of “proper English” I certainly feel that there is an adaptative element in my writing process that is taking place as I continue to produce writing piece after writing piece for my multidisciplinary, writing intensive courses. In *Valuing Writing Accents*, the authors shares similar stories of non native speakers who work hard to adjust between cultures that encompass different versions of the same language (25). These “informants” as referred to in the article, face similar stumps as I did in the their writing process: “When they receive comments such as “disjointed writing” or when their colloquialisms are not understood at all, they feel that their basic language skill is at question, that they somehow did not learn “correct” English. (Zawacki et al. 25).” I thought back to the writing mentors in my community college, and wondered if they would tear my paper apart with grammatical errors today. I wondered whether I would be bound to resist or if I would once again produce

self-doubt. Whether unintentionally or not, the writing mentors in my community college and those of the “informants” were practicing linguistic imperialism. In *Linguistic Imperialism*, Robert Phillipson defines linguistic imperialism as judging other languages by standards of our own (47). I aspire to address why mentors should create a self-awareness to deviate from linguistic imperialism and how the practice defies the writing process for non native students.

Phillipson defines linguistic imperialism as judging other languages by standards of our own (47). In their article, Wiley and Wright briefly summarize how United States policy has been enacted as a mode of practicing linguistic imperialism. During the colonial and early nationalist periods, English was imposed first as a justification for conquering other people, and then as an encroachment to prove loyalty for the nation (Wiley and Wright 145). Although we are without fault, the agenda behind linguistic imperialism, roams our writing centers and deems “proper English” the superior language.

Matthew J. Gordon describes English dialect variation in the United States as “the product of two constants:

(1) language forever changes; and (2) physical and social barriers shape communication patterns. (Hickey et al. 109).” Eastern U.S. states’ dialects sounds different from western U.S. dialects and the same goes for the variation in dialects in northern and southern areas of U.S. Considering the various dialects within these regions and even the variation within states, it seems quite preposterous to chastise students’ papers based off one solid notion of “proper English”. Linguistic imperialism accepts a “proper English” that only a portion of students get to experience, leaving behind students who face obstacles in acquiring school literacy, and even monolingual children who have a hard time mastering this skill due to differences in school demands and language practices at home (Wiley and Wright 161). Students who struggle to master proper English literacy become quite discouraged as did the “informants” in Dr Zawacki’s article, “Their concerns about grammar and vocabulary also led many of our informants to feel that they could not project the same confident voice that they had prided themselves on in their native languages. (49).”

We promote linguistic imperialism in our writing centers when we assume students can easily transfer knowledge learned from one context to the next, Ball and Loewe refer to it as the assumption of the automaticity of transfer (35). We live in a vastly diverse nation, with at least 350 spoken languages (US Census Bureau). How then do we not expect the inevitable accented English writing we experience in writing centers? Why then would we put up a fight for linguistic imperialism?

Our goal as mentors is to address the content a student's writing presents and it includes accepting the present accents in their writing. This may also mean "Students may be more apt to adapt their style if they feel their way of critical thinking and writing is being understood and appreciated (Zawacki et al, 19)." Remaining critical as a mentor based on accent is discouraging and promotes stigmatization of non-native speakers. As suggested by Wiley and Wright, "We need to move away from seeing those of who have attained English proficiency as superiorities over those of us who have not lest we go back to times when 'English literacy became a gatekeeping tool' (158)." Writing mentors must build an established

trust that sets up a relationship with writers so that they may feel empowered to ask questions. Writing mentors are part of a huge community of practice that involves every student who has come to us for help, sometimes we forget that we weren't always experts in writing ourselves. Addressing those small niches in a student's writing that pertain more to our personal pet peeves rather than the content the student presents is not a quality mentors should have. As members of this community of practice we have a responsibility to the new wave of students who are non-native speakers. It is unrealistic to get every student with completely different backgrounds from those of our own to conform to the standard English. In doing so we practice the same hegemony English settlers used to claim dominance over minorities. A community of practice is a way to promote innovation, develop social capital and spread knowledge within a group, it is a place where critical thinking is challenged. Writing mentors participate in a vast community of practice that includes both native and non-native speaking students. Repeatedly reprimanding a non-native speaking student for their deficiency in English proficiency disempowers them and limits their social mobility.

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The Workshop Model: Essential or Just a Waste of Time?

Carissa Maddox

Preface

Workshop has been at almost every step in my time at Chico State University. I have been curious about placing this heavily relied on activity into other spaces beyond creative writing. I am a poet and what I find valuable to get my own students involved in the writing process is peer review, a.k.a. workshop. Due to this, I have placed workshop into other English courses that I teach. What I have been compelled to write is advocating it be implemented in other departments beyond English. I believe that professors, lecturers, and teachers will see improvement in the papers and projects that they receive from students if they give workshop a chance and carve out time in class for it. My hope is that teachers outside of the English Department will give workshop a try after reading this essay.

Creative writing and workshopping go hand-in-hand. There is an association that creative work needs to be looked at by peers and colleagues in order for another draft to take place. There is also an association that the work will be critiqued, put through the ringer, given praise, and ultimately given suggestions for where to go next in revision. These are things that are all true, but the workshop model is not only being adopted in other writing courses (i.e. academic writing), it's also being criticized as a tool that doesn't help students, but rather gives the air of intimidation and power dynamics.

As a graduate student, as a teacher of both academic and creative writing, and as a poet, I am in full support of the Workshop Model. I believe in its power and the validation that it brings to students. I also believe in its ability to help students through issues that they're having regarding their work. In this paper I will be working through the question of its importance in creative writing spaces as well as beyond those spaces. Showing your work to others, listening to what they have to say, and then taking advice into the revision stage strengthens whatever piece you're working on and is utterly essential to

the writing process. According to Di-
anne Donnelly, "the writing workshop model for the most part, especially at the undergraduate level..., is still at the head of the Creative Writing program and the favorite part of the course" (2). This is true for my institution and something I am continuing to promote and grow wherever I teach. I will be bringing in my personal experience to further prove the Workshop Model's effectiveness in writing spaces, but I'll also be relying heavily on researchers who have been looking at the pros and cons of the current Workshop Model and what might need to be adjusted.

The Workshop Model

The Workshop Model in theory, "is an instrument that scaffolds the development and deepening of an individual's artistic abilities and, by extension, his or her contribution to society" (Howe 491). When teaching the writing process, an element present is revision. Often after we've written something, we can't see what might need to be changed, what doesn't make sense, or even the grammar mistakes. Due to this fact, we give our paper, story, poem, project, etc. over to someone else to read and give feedback. This is a

smaller version of workshop. The Workshop Model is a place in which work is presented to a group of people so that they can read it, give suggestions, say what they liked about it, but most importantly, what didn't work well in the draft. The person whose work is up for workshop, they can ask questions to the group and pin-point places in which they don't think something is working, etc. Workshop is also a way in which students can learn new skills to not only improve their own writing, but help others as well. Something that I take advantage of is actually using workshop as a teaching opportunity, especially when I've seen the same mistake multiple times in different papers. Using a piece to highlight a mistake helps students not feel as though they're being singled out and that they all have things to work on. In the role of an instructor, "we can [also] contribute to creative skill development by constructing and modifying 'mediating mechanisms'" (Harris 214). Students often feel upon being introduced to such an idea that they cannot give advice because they're not qualified. I see their point as I too felt incompetent the first time I was involved in a workshop activity, but what they don't realize is that when they're reading something, they can spot areas

that don't sound right, that might be awkward when read, and that need to be worked on in one way or another. As the Workshop Model is brought into the classroom, conversations are mediated in some fashion to get students talking about the work in front of them.

Putting this into context, workshops in creative writing function not only on the day of, but days prior. Due to the size of my class, workshop is broken up into three days: two days of full class conversation and participation where I lead and mediate; one day of small group conversations lead by a series of questions they've answered the day before. As the work is critiqued by others, the author's duty is to sit, listen, and take notes on what's being said. The final moments of their workshop time, the author has an opportunity to ask questions and give comments/ answers to questions raised during workshop.

Finding workshop so valuable to my own writing process as a poet and scholar, I have implemented workshop to be a part of my academic writing course. Workshops with my academic writing students look similar to what I have just described. I require drafts of papers in this course which creates sev-

eral opportunities for students to interact with papers at all stages of development. For example, I schedule a workshop before and after a paper has been completed and turned in. Much like in my creative writing course, my academic writing students get into groups, read papers, make comments (disregarding grammar), and then discuss the paper with the author.

I have found great success in placing the Workshop Model into my academic writing course. Though most, if not all, of these students aren't English majors, they will carry this model with them into their majors and other papers/projects and then into their careers.

Critiques on the Workshop Model

I'm in the camp of instructors who say, "How can someone find fault in workshop?" because we find that workshop is beneficial. And I'm sure that some of you reading this will also be with me in that workshop is beneficial. But according to Michael Loyd Gary, workshop has become a place in which "the emphasis [is] on failure instead of success" (17). Even Madison Smartt Bell has seen that workshops aren't actu-

ally about the work itself. It's not about the work that's being presented and how to strengthen the piece of writing, but rather "the workshop goal then becomes a quest to ferret out the flaws" (Gary 17). I find this to be an interesting critique of the Workshop Model. Failure is always on anxious minds when having someone look at their work, even if it's just a roommate or friend because students and writers tend to believe what they have out up isn't great. But what neither Gary nor Bell have looked at is the heart of workshop: knowing where you have failed. It is extremely helpful for a writer to be told the places that have failed because we often (especially when we have lived with a piece of writing for a while) become blind to the issues present in the piece.

There are yet other critics who think that the Workshop Model actually produces one mindset, one way to think about something because students might not want to go against the authority in the room—the professor. These critics "believe it is fatally flawed, repressed by hegemonic structures of race, gender, and politics, and may limit students' freedom to develop unique writers' voices" (Howe 491).

This is to say that what is really promoted is the teacher's way of seeing things. Others still say that the "theoretical egalitarian responses of the peer friendly workshop create an addling for our students when the postscript to their default response of praise contradicts that of the teacher...who has ultimate authority as evaluator of students' work upon completion of the course" (Donnelly 9). There are moments in which the Workshop Model has failed—not in the workshop itself, but the implementation of the model and the attitude around it. Approaching workshop in an authoritative way, students will feel like they can't voice their feelings or views on the piece at hand.

Beyond English Class

Implementing the Workshop Model into your course if it's not an English one, is simple. Depending on the needs of your class, cutting out some time for your students to come together during class time to swap assignments/papers/projects (even if it's just brainstorming together) is helpful to be able to see flaws that are there, which in turn gives professors more developed assignments, thoughts, and arguments. Students do have busy lives

and even scheduling group projects can be a difficult task, adding to that by putting the responsibility on them to show their work to others is a lofty notion.

The Workshop Model isn't perfect or implemented in the right or best way, but it's a functional practice that can actually go beyond the space of an English course. Typically, you would find that workshop is only done in English and the Humanities because we value the practice and believe in its power. However, as academics we all know that writing doesn't stop once a student leaves English behind and goes toward the Sciences or Geography or Art. As academics we all know that writing is part of our lives and will be a part of our student's lives, especially in college. I have been asked by professors in other departments why the English department isn't teaching grammar or teaching how sentences work. They have valid points, but quite frankly, there isn't enough time in a given semester to teach everything asked of us.

Implementing the Workshop Model into the course as a whole, especially when it comes to papers, lab write ups, observation reports, or any other major writing assignment that is required. This will help students to be

able to catch mistakes or places that they detailed or left the path. But it will also give them the opportunity to get feedback from peers on what else would be beneficial to add. Maybe the student didn't think far enough about the issue at hand. Maybe the student thought they were talking about one thing, but the paper suggests that they're talking about something completely different. As we all know, these things are possible, and it takes different eyes and people to be able to read and catch those moments to better the writing.

What Professors Need To Know

For a student, placing something up on the proverbial workshop bench is terrifying. It's something that places the student in a vulnerable position as they see their work being judged by people other than the teacher. A place in which they will be vulnerable and a place where they might feel their work is better left on the cutting room floor. There will always be students in your classrooms who don't speak to even two people in the class, let alone the entire room. There will also be people who are extremely shy and even the thought of other people seeing their writing causes anxiety. But with workshop

comes better writing. The more workshops done, the more someone will feel comfortable with their work being seen by multiple eyes and they might even seek out others to look at their work. When I was in my first Creative Writing class back in 2013, I was terrified. I was scared to show someone my work, but that was a beginning class at a junior college and that professor didn't truly create an environment where it was expected our work was to be shown to others in the class. It was more of an option. Once I attended Chico State; however, and experienced what a true workshop is, I became comfortable in the culture and realized that it was all in my head.

What I'm suggesting is that in order for workshop to be successful, the teacher has to be the one to begin with guidelines and expectations of the entire class and the process as a whole. But not only that, success comes from knowing that workshop is part of the writing process itself. I have, on several occasions, heard from students that they don't feel qualified to do the work that I'm asking of them. Finding workshop helpful in a creative sense, I stress with my students that this is part of the writing process; it's something that we

all need to do in order to produce the best work possible. Workshop isn't about the authority, it's about being honest about reactions to the piece. If something is confusing, it will be confusing to a few people. If something is organized in an awkward manner, that will be apparent to the readers. Students who feel like they're not qualified need to have workshop reframed for them. Philip Gross says that, "If even the mistakes we make responding to each others' work are part of the material, if...a negative finding can still add to knowledge, then the workshop is an unusually productive place to meet" (53). We've all shown something to a roommate, relative, significant other, or friend to look over, so if they're qualified to read and respond, then so can students who are in the class and possess the knowledge of the assignment.

The instructor also has to give students the air that they are on the same level as everyone else in the room. As the instructor, you shouldn't come to the table as the authority figure (even though you are), but rather as another pair of eyes to give advice and direction as to what the paper or creative piece needs. "Ideally in the workshop setting, the teacher situates herself in the room

not as authority but as co-explorer, as there is not one right way to approach any work of art but each new work requires new choice and new processes" (Stukenberg 280). What I mean by this is that the instructor needs to sit back and let other students talk. Gary offers some sage advice by saying that:

Teachers must make sure students who offer advice on another student's writing do so with specific, reasonable evidence of why changes should be made. Students must not go unchallenged when they base their critiques on vague statements such as, "This doesn't right to me," or "I don't think this character would say that." (18)

The author in question most likely will have been given comments prior to workshop and they may take the professor's words/advice over their peers, but workshop is different. Workshops should be student driven with the instructor acting as facilitator. I encourage teachers to be involved in workshop because things may come up in that space that wasn't seen in prior comments that might be important information to know. But what both Gary and I are advocating is that when there are students who are completely out of left field with their comments, it's the

teacher's responsibility to get that student to be more specific and concrete with their critiques.

Conclusion

The Workshop Model isn't perfect, but it's a valuable thing in academia that seems to only be valued in the English Department. By taking the skills and the writing process so valued by the English Department, other departments and courses could see an improvement in the writing proceeded. This is a short and small part of the larger picture and conversation surrounding the Workshop Model, but it's an insight into what it is and how it can be placed in any sort of course. Strengthening skills learned in a required lower level English class help students to be able to realize the importance of the course, but will also cement a writing process they can take with them into other courses and careers.

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Interaction Hypothesis Utilized in Tutoring and Mentorship

Joshua Staton

Preface

I wrote on the Interaction Hypothesis out of simple curiosity and as a reflexive tool to think back on my family dynamics. I had the term mentioned to me in a casual conversation from a professor during my internship at my college's ESL center. I hadn't heard it mentioned before and I wanted to know more, and from there, I wanted to know if it was applicable to anything I could use in mentorship or instruction outside of the didactic teaching model. As a component of my motivation to do this research, I thought I had seen the Interaction Hypothesis at work in my own immediate family.

My mother is a non-native English speaker, having moved from Japan to America over 25 years ago with three children. No one taught her English in an explicit academic setting. My father was in the Navy at the time and out on deployment. My mother learned mainly from the subtitles on TV and bits and pieces from what my elder siblings were learning as they went through the school system. After over 25 years, my mother is almost orally fluent in English. She still has difficulty with writing and composing sentences, but she can speak at a competent conversational level. I think outside of the forced immersion of moving to the States, the daily English interactions and corrections she had within the family helped refine her understanding. I did this research in part to test this hypothesis for myself.

The Interaction Hypothesis itself is a learning theory for second language acquisition where the language 2 learner (L2) vocalizes a phrase that contains an error to a particular academic authority, who then repeats the same phrase properly. According to Ellis Rod in his critical evaluation of this hypothesis:

“The Interaction Hypothesis advances two major claims about the role of interaction in L2 acquisition: Comprehensible input is necessary for L2 acquisition, and modifications to the interactional structure of conversations which take place in the process of negotiating a communication problem help to make input comprehensible to an L2 learner” (1).

Comprehensible input itself is an internalization or understanding of messages and meaning. The hypothesis then suggests that this repetition of the correct structure for that phrase will allow the L2 speaker to internalize the correct form after recognizing their mistake and push the development of their comprehension. This process and development of understanding within the tutee or student is known as “interactional restructuring,” and is a compo-

nent of the larger Interaction Hypothesis.

I believe it is important to precede this article by making it clear that the Interaction Hypothesis was not and is not the result of one single person, and that by the nature of it being a hypothesis, it is difficult to present concrete epistemic evidence in support of it. The Interaction Hypothesis is instead the ongoing accumulation of a body of work by various researchers and/or professors who have added their own understanding and complications to this theory. As a rudimentary summary:

Krashen (1980) had proposed the foundation of the theory as the “Input Hypothesis” with the idea of comprehensible inputs; Long (1983) then advanced the theory by including the importance of interactional restructuring and changed the name to the “Interaction Hypothesis;” Pica (1987) then added the additional variable of social status differences and how that pertains to the interaction with the differences in form of language or comfort with engaging in discussion (Kung Chi Yee). I want to make this clear as to recognize the history and the subtle complexities of the subject, as it is relevant to keep in mind for those of academic authority who

might utilize this hypothesis. Long and Pica themselves have adjusted their own claims and understanding of the Interaction Hypothesis through subsequent studies as the hypothesis will continue to evolve (Rod 10). It was not until 1991 though when Ellis Rod put the Interaction Hypothesis and the relevant studies under a critical evaluation that, to some degree, we were able to systematically understand the benefits and shortcomings of the Interaction Hypothesis in a collected work. My point being, that from the developing understanding of the Interaction Hypothesis and the bits of evidence we can pull towards its justification, I believe there is worth in recreating the hypothesis for writing tutoring scenarios as well.

A few complications to understanding the effects or components of the Interaction Hypothesis are pointed out in Long and Pica's later studies. By 1989 Long recognized that "comprehensible input is necessary for acquisition... [but] it may not be sufficient" (Rod 10). The counter-point that Long found was that the Interaction Hypothesis itself "[provides] the learner with opportunities for production" (prompting them to rephrase the sentence themselves in written work or in the initial instance of

their vocalized output in a conversation), and from there the question stems whether or not the development of learning is from the reconstruction of the input or the opportunity for output (Rod 10). Pica (1992), however, later "found no significant differences between learners who observed interaction and learners who took part in interaction" (Mackey 559). She then proposed that "observing interaction may be sufficient" to instigate learning and comprehension (Mackey 559). Such a claim is important in its implications that the Interaction Hypothesis is not limited to one-on-one sessions, and could be applicable to larger workshop and class scenarios. At the end Long and Pica's later work, the Interaction Hypothesis has changed from being the only explanation of L2 acquisition. It instead remained "an important element in their psycholinguistic rationale for pedagogic intervention" (Rod 11).

One of the few epistemic studies in which we can find value from the Interaction Hypothesis can be located in a subsequent study by Pica in 1989 that focused on the influence of opportunities to negotiate within the Interaction Hypothesis (Rod 17). The study then was a refinement of a previously at-

tempted experiment by Pica, Young, and Doughty in 1986 that comprised of sixteen low-intermediate learners divided into two groups: one group received directions requiring them to choose and place items on a small board illustrated with an outdoor scene, and the other group with the same baseline directions but were given opportunities to seek verbal assistance if they did not understand (Rod 16-17). The subsequent study in 1989 sought to ensure the causality of the results was directly linked to the opportunities for negotiating meaning, interaction, and not other factors. The result was that the difference in comprehension scores between the two groups were “81% and 88% respectively” (Rod 17). While the difference “was not statistically significant... a post-hoc analysis of the results showed that for those learners who were rated as having lower comprehension ability by their teachers, the opportunity to interact was beneficial” (Rod 17). Pica would then “conclude that opportunities for negotiation may be most beneficial for learners in the early stage of L2 acquisition,” but appropriating that into tutoring and mentorship, we can infer that the Interaction Hypothesis can be beneficial for individuals with limited or beginning understanding of

certain grammatical conventions (Rod 17). A key point in the value I find in the Interaction Hypothesis is that it illustrates a method of learning and engaging with learners outside of a didactic teaching model, and that it is not necessarily restricted to second language learners. In regards to a scenario for writing tutoring, I imagine this hypothesis can be put into practice while reading aloud.

Application

When a tutor encounters a significant error in a provided text while reading it aloud with the tutee, perhaps an error that occurs at several points in the draft or radically changes the interpretation of the sentence, the tutor can prompt the tutee to re-examine the sentence. It is important to note that the tutor should not explicitly point out the error or correct the mistake on their own, but instead let the tutee engage with the construction on their own terms. This is a component of Long’s “interactional restructuring” and “comprehensible input” that contributes to the Interaction Hypothesis. Prompting the tutee to re-examine the sentence allows them to engage with the sentence at a deeper level and redefine what they

wanted to say, and regardless of whether the tutee is able to correctly identify the error or not, a vocalization of the correct or alternative form from the tutor will then allow the tutee an opportunity to push their own understanding. A follow-up explanation of the change by the tutor will contribute to the quality of the comprehensible input for the tutee to transition that input into the higher level of acquisition. The goal then of the Interaction Hypothesis in this scenario is to enable the tutee to become gradually self-sufficient in correcting their own errors, to move beyond making mechanical adjustments to the provided piece of writing and instead to provide opportunities for learning that will extend outside of the tutoring session.

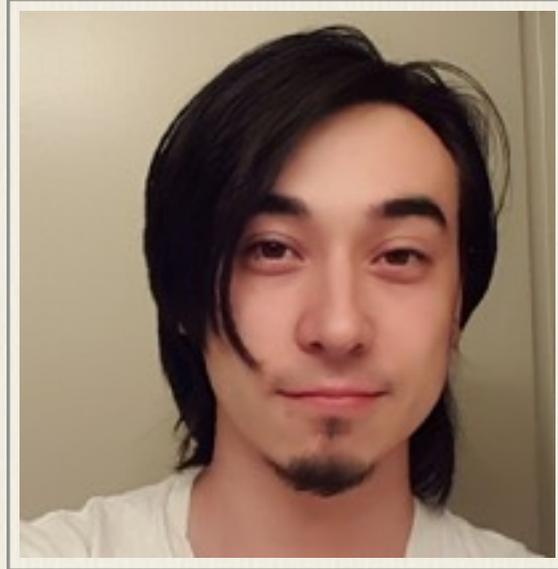
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Issues of Identity in Writing in a (Liminal) Learning Space

Shane LaVigne

Preface

The following chapter is constructed on the basis that students struggle with the assimilation of new academic identities. Many years ago, when I first began my collegiate career, I myself struggled with finding my academic identity. The unpopularity of multidisciplinary genre practice in novice-aimed college courses creates a homogenization of academic identities that can easily exasperate this struggle. In response to my own academic experiences, I present an essay that argues for a greater allowance of student agency as a way to connect the internal logic of personal necessities with the logic of the course design and goals.

In *Naming What we Know About Writing*, edited by Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth Wardle, Kevin Roozen argues that writing is often equated to simply the transcribing of the cognitive into the physical. Roozen suggests that writing is instead “not so much about using a particular set of skills as it is about becoming a particular kind of person, about developing a sense of who we are” (Roozen 51). Through writing, students interact with their social communities and develop their knowledge of those communities through that interaction. There is much potential benefit in viewing the writing process in this way as it can highlight the ability for writing to be an inlet to entering various communities. Further, Roozen points out that “difficulties people have with writing are not necessarily due to a lack of intelligence or a diminished level of literacy but rather to whether they can see themselves as participants in a particular community” (Roozen 51). It is therefore of grave importance that educators can identify the difference and work to facilitate the assimilation of new student identities as they enter an environment situated by seemingly monolithic academic disciplines.

Thinking back to our classroom experience as a student, we can all recall a moment where we were ‘lost,’ stuck in a cognitive phase. Sometimes we manage to proceed, have an ‘aha’ moment and continue to build on that learning. Other times, that moment won’t seem to come, and we give up, exclaiming ‘it’s not for us.’ We all laugh, cathartically, at the moment where our colleague disavows mathematics while chuckling ‘this is why I’m an English major.’ At the core of this self-alienation however, is a difficulty in proceeding through the learning phases of the discipline, a difficulty in organizing one’s identity in a space that demands a cognitive change. By viewing the learning process as a liminal state for students’ identities, educators can prepare situations that work to alleviate the difficulties in managing these identities.

Limen is word borrowed from Latin meaning ‘threshold.’ The term was popularized by French folklorist Arnold van Gennep for use in denoting the three phases in what he referred to as the ‘rites of passage’ that occur during a ritual. This concept was later adopted by British cultural anthropologist Victor Turner to frame the passage of boy into man during the rituals of the

Ndembu people in south-central Africa. In *Anthropology of Performance*, Turner offers his interpretation of these tripartite phases:

Rituals separated specific members of a group from everyday life, placed them in a limbo that was not any place they were in before and not yet any place they would be in, then returned them, changed in some way, to mundane life. (Turner 25)

The second of these three phases, the “limbo,” is known as the liminal phase and is the center of study in liminality theory as a transdisciplinary tool.

Liminality theory specifically within the learning space has been proposed as a useful tool by the pedagogical scholar Ray Land. In the pedagogical context, Land defines liminality as “a transformative state in the process of learning in which there is a reformulation of the learner’s meaning frame and an accompanying shift in the learner’s subjectivity” (Land et al. 199). Further, Land proposes that this space is intrinsically troublesome and causes a recognition of shortcomings in the learner’s existing view of the phenome-

non in question and an eventual letting go of the older prevailing view (Land et al. 199). Building from the work of Leslie Schwartzman, Land sees the primary phase that initiates the troublesome secondary (liminal) phase as being the result of threshold concepts.

Threshold concepts are “certain concepts, practices or forms of learning experience that can act in the manner of a portal, or learning threshold, through which a new perspective opens up for the learner” (Land et al. 201). These concepts are meant to be challenging, sheering away preconceived signs or signifiers and priming the learner for a progression into a new literacy. However, the troublesome nature of this space is not as discrete as Land suggests and often the destabilization of old concepts can disorient the learner’s identity as built from those concepts.

In *Literacy Practices and Perceptions of Agency*, Bronwyn T. Williams describes liminality as “one of the most challenging moments in terms of perceptions of agency” (Williams 104-105). During the liminal phase, students may battle with self doubt that arises from feeling alienated through the deconstruction of their agency (via troubling concepts). This illuminates an

indirect challenge to Land's model of liminality as "such feelings reveal the unstable, recursive, and certainly nonlinear nature of how we construct and perform our literate identities" (Williams 105). That said, Land is not so disillusioned to assume that students will be able to tackle a threshold concept without failing and having to correct their approach. But what Williams highlights is that students can only withstand so much cognitive resistance in assimilating an identity before they become separated from that process altogether. The basis of the resilience of a student to continue in this space is an open question, but the difference between students is likely not as predetermined as statements like "this is why I'm an English major" would suggest. Rather, the ability to continue in that space could be better supported by reinforcing a sense of identity as a member of that space.

The issue of maintaining a healthy identity within a learning environment is tackled by Etienne Wenger in "Communities of Practice and Social Learning Systems." Wenger frames the problem of navigating phases as a crossing of boundaries. These boundaries "arise from different enterprises; different

ways of engaging with one another; different histories, repertoires, ways of communicating, and capabilities" (Wenger 232). For our purposes, we can focus on a student interacting with the boundary of an academic discipline and the teacher as an agent of that discipline. While Wenger highlights some of the positive aspects that trouble in boundary interplay can have, he also warns of situations that are ineffective and damaging:

Sitting by that group of high-energy particle physicists, you might not learn much because the distance between your own experience and the competence you are confronting is just too great. Mostly what you are learning is that you do not belong. (Wenger 233)

Because of the specialized knowledge involved, situations like these might not affect your identity, but if the concept is necessary for your progression in scholastic environments, then it can negatively affect your identity as a student. For students of a specialized community, simply interacting with that space is not enough. The shift in identity is too severe. It is often possible for

anyone to become a high-energy particle physicist, but the gap toward assimilating this identity is too far.

Rather than treating the necessarily problematic nature of threshold concepts as an ‘invisible hand’ with which to enact changes on a student, increasing student agency relative to the stress of the threshold can help to shorten the gap of identity assimilation and lower potential failure in entering the postliminality of a threshold concept. To help recuperate student agency during the acquisition of these thresholds, or new academic practices, promotion of other post-liminal, familiar practices can be beneficial to managing identity.

Sometimes giving students choice of genre, mode, or code when enacting a writing assignment or situation can be an example of agency reinforcement. Classes may choose to weigh these instances as particularly ‘low-stakes,’ based on student participation, while using a platform like a blog, tweet or even a personal letter, diary, etc. The students should be free to use their own language in these spaces, promoting a cathartic learning experience, which is supported by the University of Michigan’s Sweetland Center for Writing that argues:

Research shows that it’s important for students to use their own personal language when they are assimilating new knowledge, and low-stakes writing is the perfect format for students to explore course material in their own words (Integrating Low-Stakes Writing Into Large Classes).

Tackling threshold concepts through allowing for self expression gives students the power to mediate and support their own identities. This increased student agency results in more deviation from preexisting models; it has become personalized by the student/novice of a community. By allowing for students to determine the language they use when writing their low-stakes assignments, students not only are better prepared to reflect on the course’s threshold concepts via a scaffolded approach of increased difficulty, but writing crafted in this way becomes necessarily a ‘boundary object,’ which is a plastic object that inhabits the informational requirements of its intersecting social worlds (Star & Griesemer 393). The creation and management of these objects further gives students the experience they need to assimilate new identities, as each of these

objects was crafted with an overlap of identity in mind.

Liminality theory can be confusing and not particularly well defined, but the way it seeks to measure the phases of identity is of particular interest to educators and students alike. Writing as a way to affect identity when navigating social and academic spaces is a perfect place to apply liminal theory concepts to better understand the structure of identity making and to allow educators to be more aware of dangers along the way. Creating courses with low-stakes writing, like blogs, can be a great opportunity for students to both work through threshold concepts on their own terms, but also create boundary objects that serve as an example of how multiple identities co-exist within seemingly discrete academic communities. Teachers and tutors can enact similar models of agency reinforcement to improve student outcomes, and convince more students that they are writers, mathematicians or even particle physicists.

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Standard American English: Pedagogical Perspective and Approaches

Coral Olynyk

Preface

After fairly recently discovering my interest in teaching English to speakers of other languages, this essay presented itself as the perfect opportunity for researching a topic within this field. I began this work wanting to learn more about Standard American English and the place it has, if any, within literacy teaching. While exploring various perspectives on the subject, I confronted biases of my own. Part of the reason I chose this topic was because I recognized that I was undecided on this controversial topic, and wanted to research it and apply what I learned to my future teaching. My hope for this essay is that it provides insight as to the assumptions and resulting attitudes regarding teaching a standard English, especially in more diverse classrooms.

Of the many challenges facing educators, some issues seem to only grow in complexity and resist resolution. For many years, language has posed a plethora of questions and led to a variety of debates connected to literacy. Many of these debates center on questions of definition, such as what constitutes Standard American English and what that means for the other varieties of English spoken in the United States. Dialogues seeking to define standards within language offer a necessary starting point; however, often given less attention is the matter of how educators, particularly English instructors, can best approach diversity of language in the classroom while effectively teaching the English language.

African American Language, also known as Ebonics, offers an interesting example of the complexities that arise in literacy teaching. In her chapter “African American Language is not Good English” from the collection *Bad Ideas about Writing*, Jennifer Cunningham discusses the “bad idea” that many in the field of academia harbor or fall susceptible to regarding Standard American English. Situated between two similar chapters, her brief chapter addresses assumptions surrounding views

of American English as standard, official, or correct in literacy teaching. It can be easy to fall into some of these biases without properly understanding the underlying issues. Though widely circulated and familiar to those within education, these topics are continuously misunderstood. Cunningham specifically focuses on how communities perpetuate the stigma that African American Language is bad English and reflects a poor understanding of the English language (88). Because one’s use of language reflects identity, labeling an individual’s language as incorrect or lesser results in the mass marginalization and devaluing of people.

Reading these bad ideas admittedly helped me confront some of my own biases. While I believe other languages hold value as well as one’s culture and identity, I have also observed myself advocating for what Cunningham and others call Standard American English. It is easy to enforce the same rules that one has had to learn under and adapt to. Rather than teaching according to tradition, Cunningham’s chapter encourages instructors to consider new methods and, namely, confront the myth that there is one correct way to write.

On a more realistic and logical note, there is a need for some standard within academic writing. Cunningham approaches this with the idea that teachers can “...help students navigate Standard American English expectations while not suggesting a linguistic hierarchy” (91). Rather than asserting one language as more correct or valuable than another, educators need to understand differences so as to equip speakers to “...understand, acquire, and switch between both....” languages (91). As she points out, African American Language, sometimes termed black English or even slang, is in fact not English. Though it shares an English lexicon, it consists of different grammatical, phonological and morphological rules that distinguish it from the English language.

Cunningham provides a simple but necessary reminder that languages are organized into their language families based on their grammatical origins. It seems intuitive and simple, almost logical, that a language’s vocabulary would be used to categorize it, which is most likely why African American English is thought to be a dialect of English; however, Cunningham stands by a second hypothesis, which asserts that this lan-

guage developed out of a blend of languages used by people with varied linguistic backgrounds and consists of largely English language vocabulary but adheres to West African grammatical and phonological rules (89). Based on its grammatical origins in the Niger-Congo or western and southern parts of Africa, the need to consider it linguistically as an African language proves significant (89).

Knowledge about second language acquisition helps to recognize the examples Cunningham provides as completely relevant in further understanding how African American Language follows prescribed grammatical and phonological rules that differ from those in English. Incorporating work from other linguists, she includes examples such as zero copula and habitual be. She also explains common and ever-controversial misconceptions linked to the absence or “misuse” of the verb “be” as well as the negative concord, often called the double negative (89-90). Perhaps most significant, she touches on the fact that English has sounds that other languages do not, leading speakers of other languages to replace or simplify those sounds in an effort to pronounce them (90). It is valu-

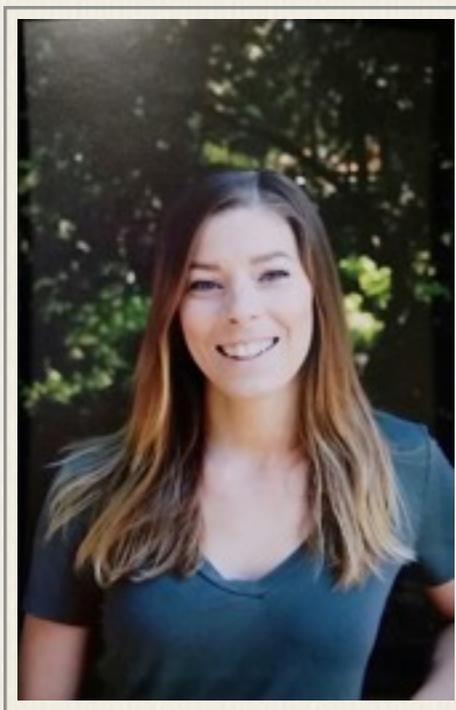
able to approach this in the classroom by trying to help students understand the differences between Standard American English and African American Language as well as other languages, then qualifying those differences by explaining that “...different audiences and contexts expect different language choices” (91). In this way, students might learn that language has many purposes and therefore be more receptive to the value of code-switching.

When discussing differences between languages, varieties of English present their own set of challenges that require navigating what exactly the standard is and what the nonstandard is. As Raven I. McDavid, Jr. argues in her article, “Variations in Standard American English,” “...a standard variety of a language is the variety used by those who hold positions of trust and respect and conduct the important affairs of a community” (2). The establishment of a standard allows members of a community to share certain meanings. Successful understanding and use of standard English is therefore a valuable goal of curriculum. Keeping in mind that languages are inherited from communities and tied to identity and experi-

ence, Standard American English instruction needs to be accompanied by an attitude of respect and inclusivity for nonstandard varieties of English.

What constitutes Standard American English? What does that mean for the other varieties of English spoken in the United States? How can educators, particularly English instructors, best approach diversity of language in the classroom while effectively teaching the English language?

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Code-Meshing and the Power of Language in the Writing Classroom

Hannah Duran

Preface

In the following chapter, I address and unpack some of the scholarship surrounding the term code-meshing, a language practice and contested writing strategy that accommodates the blending or mixing of multiple codes. My interests in code-meshing, and code-switching for that matter, stemmed from a research project I recently conducted that explored the two language practices in relation to African American English. Although these concepts are hot topics currently circulating the fields of rhetoric and writing studies, general conclusions have yet to be drawn on which practice ought to be encouraged in writing institutions.

In the ongoing discussion of how to support diversity in education, language usage and its variation has been possibly one of the most debated features of writing pedagogy and instruction. In response to questions about linguistic diversity, scholars have promoted a pedagogy of “code-meshing” as a language practice and strategy of writing that focuses on “the intentional incorporation of more than one language in writing to ‘exploit and blend those differences’” (Lee and Handsfield 3). Various scholars who encourage the adoption of code-meshing all define the concept essentially the same—the blending of languages in the same context—but focus on different factors of the language practice depending on the angle they are promoting.

The contested question of how and to what degree code-meshing should be adopted within writing classrooms stems from two sides of an ongoing argument. One side, informed by scholars like Geneva Smitherman and Vershawn Young, argues that if students continue to view their home dialects and languages such as African-American English negatively—due to remaining language hierarchies in academia—or if they are not given oppor-

tunities to speak, read, and write in their home language, they will lose that home language. The other side calls into question the idea that because language means access and power, it is then our responsibility as educators to teach all students the deemed language of economic access, Standard American English, as a beneficial tool for life beyond the academy. With the increasing diversification in education and the proliferating scholarship and debate surrounding code-meshing, what seems to still be the issue is the stasis question of policy. In other words, there is not only the debated question of whether or not action should be taken in incorporating code-meshing within pedagogy, but what a curriculum of code-meshing, and the teaching practices that accompany that curriculum, would look like in the writing classroom.

In contrast to situational code-switching, which calls for bidialectalism and linguistic division, code-meshing is a language practice that calls for multidialectalism and is a pedagogical model that recognizes all dialects of English as valid and valuable. The introduction and promotion of code-meshing responds to the exigence that there is only one correct way to speak and write in

English, and the dominant language ideology, whether intentionally or not, emphasizes monolingualism and encourages negative attitudes towards speakers of other dialects and languages. Responding to the former, in his chapter within the collection titled *Language Diversity in the Classroom: From Intention to Practice*, Kim Brian Lovejoy conveys how “resistance to language that does not conform to EAE [Edited American English] or to ‘correct’ English usage—the language of the schools—can be felt in classrooms at all educational levels” (Smitherman and Villanueva 93). Lovejoy responds to the misconception of EAE that arose from the 1974 Conference on College Composition and Communication “Students’ Right to Their Own Language.” Some scholars felt this resolution, which sought to affirm and encourage the inclusion of students’ own patterns, varieties, and dialects of language within academia, meant the obliteration of Edited American English, or Standard English, within pedagogy. Lovejoy counters this belief, stating that, “the ‘Students’ Right’ policy was never intended to diminish the importance of EAE; rather, it was a call for teachers to teach EAE within the context of other Englishes” (92).

In *Bad Ideas About Writing*, Anjali Patanayak deconstructs the conception that there is one correct way of writing and speaking, and addresses the negative attitudes towards marginalized dialects conveying, “how attitudes toward students as writers are interwoven with attitudes toward them as people. Language cannot be disassociated from people, which has important consequences for those who grow up speaking different dialects” (Ball and Loewe 84). Patanayak is concerned with the ways in which preoccupations with correctness in language “devalues people.” The idea that people negatively view others who speak another dialect or language reveals how intricately language and identity are connected and how the two constantly inform each other. Gloria Anzaldúa, a famous Chicana writer and scholar, conveys the power of language in relation to identity: “So, if you want to really hurt me, talk badly about my language. Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity” (81). And because language constitutes a part of one’s identity, scholars like Young worry that code-switching instruction will increase student’s negative attitudes

about their language and thus their identity due to the way Standard English is presented as the formal dialect and African American English as informal (Young 70). In his coauthored book *Other People's English: Code-Meshing, Code-Switching, and African American Literacy*, Young clarifies how code-meshing “as a practice, of course, is not new; it just hasn't been widely theorized and presented as a way to read, write, speak, and listen to Englishes” (Young 77). In various ways, Young is trying to alter the way we view academic writing. By arguing that code-meshing is what makes writing stylistically savvy, he is attempting to frame the way we perceive writing in moving past traditional and unadventurous modes of composition. Young feels code-meshing as a beneficial way to write and teach writing in that its goal is to “maximize (not minimize) rhetorical effectiveness... [with] the focus on excellent communication rather than how well one adheres to prescribed grammar rules in one dialect” (81). This idea of prioritizing rhetorical effectiveness and excellent communication over adhering to grammar rules is explicated later by Lovejoy, where he advocates for building a community of code-meshers in regards to college writing instruction. Lovejoy ar-

gues that to teach students “to view language through a broader lens and focus on the rhetoric of choice rather than on surface errors in Standard English... we communicate to students that their ideas and the rhetorical decisions that give them substance and flair really do matter for readers” (145). He also communicates the need to “up the stakes of code-meshing” by encouraging revision, as well as the idea that producing a final copy of any piece of writing involves multiple drafts. Lovejoy's concern is that an emphasis on code-switching rather than code-meshing would reinforce a skewed view of revision, and the writing process in general, as merely generating a draft and then editing it for grammar and conventions of the home language, therefore short-cutting the process that leads to rich and meaningful writing (149).

Like many supporters of code-meshing, Young feels that rather than teaching situational code-switching—a pattern of language alteration in which one language is used in one context and another language is used in another context—code-meshing, the blending of dialects, ought to be the new way to teach and “do English” (76). In his chapter, Young suggests that code-

switching can and should be reframed as code-meshing within educational discourse. There are various categorizations of code-switching with one definition of code-switching, metaphorical code-switching, referring to the same practice as code-meshing in that it is defined as the use of two languages in the same context. Because most people do not understand that code-switching has a variation of definitions and distinctions, Young suggests that we should “import the full range of what code-switching means into the curriculum, where students learn metaphorical, intrasentential, and intersentential code-switching, with a focus on mutuality and combinability” (73). In this case, students would be learning what Young is actively trying to integrate in the classroom setting—code-meshing. For example, Young draws on an excerpt from a poem that code-switching advocates Rebecca Wheeler and Rachel Swords use as an example of situational code-switching: “Well, son, I’ll tell you: (Standard)/ Life for me ain’t been no crystal stair (African American)” (74). Young reveals that the use of this poem is contradicting the goal of showing students how to situationally code-switch because the switching in the poem “occurs in one place, in the context of one

piece of writing” (74). Thus, this poem is actually an example of metaphorical code-switching, which is the same thing as code-meshing. Young feels that reframing code-switching by adopting its full range of meanings in the classroom would be beneficial in that it would mean that “grammar would be taught ‘in conjunction with semantics and rhetoric... showing how and in what ways grammatical structures convey meanings and influence the rhetorical force of written work’” (75).

In their article “Code-Meshing and Writing Instruction in Multilingual Classrooms” Alice Lee and Lara Handsfield talk about code-meshing as a translanguaging practice. They define translanguaging practices in reference to how bilingual and bidialectal students dynamically move across and among languages (Lee and Handsfield 2). Suresh Canagarajah discusses how translanguaging is a natural occurring phenomenon, defining the practice as “the ability of multilingual speakers to shuttle between languages, treating the diverse languages that form their repertoire as an integrated system” (401). Canagarajah argues we must afford safe spaces in our classrooms for students to practice translanguaging. Lee

and Handsfield examine two classroom settings in which the teachers allow for translanguage practices like code-meshing to take place in students' writing. The authors explore two examples of young kids code-meshing in low-stakes writing situations. One example shows a 4-year-old boy's Mother's Day card in which he blends his home language of African American English with Standard English. The other example shows a fourth-grade bilingual speaker code-meshing in a creative writing assignment by virtually substituting all the English nouns for Spanish ones. These two examples demonstrate how attention to language and audience within the classroom can be illuminated even at a young age. Lee and Handsfield discuss more pedagogical possibilities of implementing code-meshing in the K-12 classroom, one being the use of mentor texts, or touchstone texts for teaching varieties of literary concepts. The two authors argue that selecting mentor texts with code-meshing would honor languages other than Standard English and engage multilingual speakers with a language they are already familiar with. They provide some examples of potential mentor texts and outline a lesson plan in which teachers involve students in analyzing authors' lan-

guage choices of the mentor texts to prompt complex thinking about language and show how students can incorporate their own languages in ways that enhance both the complexity and authenticity of their writing (6).

The final chapter of *Other People's English* outlines an experimental application of code-meshing within college writing classes in which Lovejoy describes a model of what he terms "self-directed writing" as a tool for teaching code-meshing in writing. Lovejoy's pedagogy of self-directed writing builds off of James Britton's theory of "expressive" writing in which writing is not necessarily solely about or for the self, as most people would believe expressive writing to entail, but "denotes the personal language of the writer" (Young 131). Canagarajah takes this "personal language of the writer" idea up in his article in which he argues that students naturally have a desire to be able to use their own vernaculars in the classroom setting. He contends that, "to use a language without any personal engagement, even for temporary utilitarian and pragmatic reasons, is to mimic not speak" (Canagarajah 597). For Lovejoy, this personal engagement with language encourages the development of

students' voices, and self-directed writing becomes a place in which, as he illustrates, teachers can write with their students as they experiment with code-meshing. Lovejoy stresses the importance of *experimenting* with code-meshing because it “takes the edge off risk, since both teachers and students might feel edgy about code-meshing because of the ingrained standard language ideology” (Young 132).

Throughout the chapter, Lovejoy outlines various lesson plans and includes samples of writing that show different genres and styles for purposes of analytical discussions on writer choice and purpose. Some of the writing samples he uses include: ads, blogs, dramatic dialogue, letter to the editor, excerpts from fiction, and excerpts from nonfiction. Through discussions of the various writing samples, Lovejoy and his students are able to talk about writer's choices as purposeful and the varieties of English that do not conform to rigid expectations but still convey powerful meanings (134). His goal is to expand students' perceptions of what constitutes “good writing” as well as their understanding of the power of language differences. In his review essay, Brian Ray sums up Lovejoy's writ-

ing course reformation beautifully, stating that it is “not a radical restructuring of college writing courses, but reframing attitudes so that instructor feedback and peer workshops, for once, become places where languages are seen in cooperation rather than competition for dominance. Drawing on different Englishes and languages becomes much less a matter of right/wrong, and more so a discussion of when/how” (100). In other words, in introducing and experimenting with code-meshing through self-directed writing, Lovejoy is moving away from attitudes of writing that prioritizes the idea of getting it “right”—or getting it into Standard English—to focusing on the rhetorical and intentional choices of the writer honoring their crafting processes and abilities to communicate real ideas to real audiences (Young 142).

In regards to the role of mentorship, I have argued in other work that the mentor wants to encourage a writer identity in students and with that push students to write not simply in compliance of getting a good grade. If this is true, shouldn't mentors, like instructors, prompt students to not only write about

ideas that matter to them, as Lovejoy argues, but even further, encourage them to use language meaningfully by appropriating it and making it their own through code-meshing? If so, the concept of code-meshing as a writing strategy may be something all writing mentors should know about and be able to identify. As more and more instructors are allowing for students to code-mesh within their writing, it would be beneficial for writing mentors to know not only how to recognize the practice, but become trained in ways to assist, guide, and provide feedback and strategies to help students assess their own language choices in regards to communicative effectiveness and rhetorical factors like audience, genre, and context.

Amy Vetter's case study article, "You Need Some Laugh Bones," examines a high school teacher who leveraged students' home language as a tool to gain engaged participants in a literacy community. Vetter used discourse analysis framed around positioning theory to interpret classroom interactions between the teacher and her students who spoke African American Language. She witnessed how this teacher, "attempted to value and understand AAL, [and] lever-

aged AAL during interactions that attempted to position students as members of a literacy community" (Vetter 199). Vetter concludes her case study by suggesting that educators become more aware or informed on other varieties of English. She proposes the idea of teacher education programs in which coursework would be offered on the history of nonstandard languages and with internships in which preservice teachers work with mentors who are knowledgeable about how to leverage nonstandard Englishes (like African American English) in a literacy classroom (Vetter 201). I believe programs like this could be helpful for writing mentors, as well as in regards to learning about other dialects and possibly additional instruction on how to work with and respond to students who code-mesh in their writing. A program educating not only writing instructors but mentors on nonstandard dialects and code-meshing would be an ideal integration within universities. That said, I think the main limitation or problem in developing programs like this would be one of plausibility. These programs would not only take time, money, and planning, but instructors and educators who are personally invested and involved in the furthering of code-

meshing within academia and would be willing to make these programs happen.

A goal of this chapter was to call attention to the powerful function of language in education. Promoting a separate but equal mindset through a pedagogy of situational code-switching or sustaining language hierarchies within classrooms can result in students developing negative attitudes of their language and themselves. The other goal was to outline both the intricacies and benefits of code-meshing as a literacy education model. But even with all the scholarship promoting and advocating for code-meshing in academia, the call for the language practice as a tool for teaching has still left educators and instructors of writing somewhat wary and hesitant. For example, if there is pushback from bidialectal and bilingual speakers themselves against code-meshing in their writing, is this something that we should still, as writing instructors, encourage, promote, and/or teach? That in mind, we as writing instructors want to teach and demand competency in Standard English while also implementing code-meshing. It all comes back to the stasis question of policy. Should we implement code-

meshing instruction within the classroom? If so, how do we create a balance in teaching Standard English while also developing a code-meshing pedagogy?

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