

Sociolinguistics for Language and Literacy Educators

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Research in sociolinguistics offers important understandings of the social dynamics impacting how language is acquired, used, perceived, and treated in the U.S. and beyond. It provides opportunities to critically examine societal structures and attitudes surrounding language (including our own beliefs) that create and uphold social and racial hierarchies—a worthwhile pursuit for any educator. As teachers of composition, we are implicated by these and other social, linguistic, raced, gendered, and political realities, which not only affect our students and us, but also reflect and maintain our pedagogies and the educational systems in which we participate.

In the graduate course I describe, Sociolinguistics for Language and Literacy Educators (SLLE), students examine research in sociolinguistics to better understand how language and society are entangled. Through this examination, they contemplate how and why teachers of language and literacy might better understand and address such interrelations. This course serves as one example for how graduate programs in composition and rhetoric might develop seminars that introduce to new teachers the relevant and too often overlooked scholarship coming out of sociolinguistics.

Institutional Context

This graduate seminar is part of the Master's Program in Language and Literacy at City College of New York (City College). City College is part of the City University of New York (CUNY) structure, a massive and strikingly diverse public university system connecting twenty-four higher education institutions in New York City ("Colleges and Schools"). Collectively, the quarter of a million students enrolled in CUNY colleges ("Total Enrollment") speak over 170 languages ("A Profile") and represent more than 125 countries ("Country of Birth"). City College, which enrolls approximately 16,000 students each year ("Total Enrollment"), was the first college established in the CUNY system as well as first in the nation to offer free higher education, beginning in 1874 ("Our History"). The institution, and the CUNY system more generally, has also been the site of public debate surrounding open enrollment in the 1970s (Lavin and Hyllegard), "remediation phase-out" controversies in 2000 (Gleason "Remediation"), as well as the site of important research in the fields of composition and basic writing, namely from scholars Mina Shaughnessy, Marilyn Sternglass, and Mary Soliday.

The English Department at City College has the largest faculty on campus and is home to a first-year composition program, four undergraduate programs (Literature, Secondary English Education, Creative Writing, and an English Minor), and three graduate programs (Language and Literacy, English Literature, and Creative Writing). The Language and Literacy MA program (hereafter L&L) was developed in 1975 by Mina Shaughnessy and was reconfigured and re-named by Marilyn Sternglass who envisioned the program as preparing English language and literacy teachers working in high school, college, and community settings (Gleason “Reasoning”). Barbara Gleason, who has directed the graduate program since 2003, shifted the program’s theoretical and pedagogical focus to prepare teachers to primarily work with adult learners. Thus, the program is distinctive not only for its historical status and urban location, but also for its blending of linguistics and composition and its emphasis on teaching adult English language learners across institutional and community contexts.

Each year, the L&L program serves an average of twenty-eight matriculated students who are diverse in their interests, identities, and cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Most, however, are natives or long-time residents of New York City who work full-time, with some already working or volunteering as English teachers or tutors in community centers, language institutes, libraries, high schools, and colleges. The MA program requires students to complete four core courses, six electives, and a foreign language requirement. Core courses include Introduction to Language Studies, Second Language Acquisition, Theories and Models of Literacy, and Adult Learners of Language and Literacy. Sociolinguistics¹ is one of a handful of electives available in and beyond the L&L program that students may take to fulfill elective requirements. SLLE is my version of this course. Other recently offered electives include Digital Literacies, Contemporary Composition Pedagogies, Introduction to Teaching Composition and Literature, Basic Writing Theory and Practice, and Teaching Adult Writers in Diverse Contexts.

Over the fifteen-week semester, students of SLLE engage in cross-disciplinary readings, a range of reflective and research assignments, and weekly seminar discussions. The course invites students to examine how language attitudes impact the material realities of their current and future students and how standard language ideology shapes their own perceptions and practices as new or developing teachers of English language and composition. The course begins with a survey of sociolinguistics research to introduce fundamental findings on linguistic variance, cultural perceptions of language, the bonds between identity and language, and the sociopolitical dynamics of accents, dialects, and multilingualism. Building from this foundational knowledge in sociolinguistics, students then study (and interrogate) an array of linguistic

myths, such as the myth of non-accents, the myth of standard language, and the myth of nonstandardized varieties being inadequate or substandard. Then, the bulk of the course's content is to attend carefully to what sociolinguistics teaches us about the ways language is used in the U.S. to identify, subordinate, and discriminate against groups of people, while the assignments and class discussions ask students to draw connections between research in sociolinguistics and in composition studies and to reflect on their own experiences with language and teaching.

Theoretical Rationale

This course emerged from my perspective that teachers of English language and literacy are long overdue in coming to terms with the ways our classrooms perpetuate standard language ideology, a belief system that has for decades been exposed as oppressive to marginalized groups of people. Based on the research of James Milroy and Rosina-Lippi Green, I have elsewhere defined standard language ideology as “the unquestioned belief system that assigns the written language variety of a privileged group as standard (and superior) and all others nonstandard (and inferior), a worldview uncritically assumed neutral and commonsensical but used as an instrument for social stratification and maintaining the interests of privileged groups” (Watson). Since standard language ideology works to uphold social and racial hierarchies, it seems essential that all instructors of writing, new and seasoned alike, examine the ways this harmful belief system permeates our field's teaching practices. However, while numerous scholars across fields have revealed for nearly fifty years the problems with privileging and standardizing American Academic English² (among other standardized varieties across the globe), we have consistently faltered in composition studies and in higher education at large to determine an effective and ethical path forward. In a field that prides itself on striving for social justice, the very essence of our identity—being experts of standardized English—is wrapped up in this problematic and harmful ideology. This must be acknowledged and tended to in a variety of ways, including through the training of new teachers. In the past, I have typically drawn on research from composition studies to examine monolingualist ideologies with undergraduate students, graduate students, and new writing teachers. However, and importantly, it wasn't until I began focusing on research in sociolinguistics that I actually felt successful in effectively introducing and exploring with newcomers the sociopolitics of language and monolingualist ideologies.

Thus, I see a focus on sociolinguistics, especially research on standard language ideology, as instrumental in compelling new teachers to begin reassessing their own affinities for Standardized English (SE) and their roles in

perpetuating standard language ideology. I concur with Melinda J. McBee Orzulak that “writing teacher education may benefit from a more explicit focus on language, specifically standard language ideology” primarily because, as she argues, “The traditional position of writing teachers as standard-bearers, or ‘gatekeepers,’ creates potential conflicting ideologies for pre-service teachers who are also taught about language variety and culturally relevant pedagogy during teacher education” (12). While McBee Orzulak’s research is on pre-service teachers destined for K-12 institutional contexts, her findings are relevant for college composition. As she indicates, we send a contradictory message when we impress upon new teachers the need to treat students and their writing in more linguistically and culturally inclusive ways without also simultaneously deconstructing the age-old tradition of focusing on rhetorical and grammatical deviations of SE and honoring our profession’s deeply entrenched (but linguistically false) assumptions about the superiority of SE. Examining research on sociolinguistics and standard language ideology helps with this sort of deconstruction process.

I’ll be the first to say that a single course taught, even at multiple institutions across the nation, will not solve the problem of standard language ideology. Training new teachers about the ills of standard language ideology is far from all that needs done, but I believe it should be part of what we do. When we teach composition, we should examine with students standard language ideology, and when we train new teachers, we should examine with them standard language ideology (Watson and Shapiro). I should also emphasize that this argument for infusing sociolinguistics into the research and teaching of composition studies is far from new. In the 1970s we saw our interest in borrowing from sociolinguistics peak with the movement and research leading up to the “CCCC Resolution on Students Right to Their Own Language,” a statement that primarily prevails on the research of sociolinguists. My course is one effort suggesting that we still have much to gain by returning to sociolinguistics.

That said, I adjusted the title of my course from Sociolinguistics to Sociolinguistics for Language and Literacy Educators to represent my objective to narrow the course’s focus to the specific areas of inquiry in sociolinguistics that are particularly useful and applicable for the teaching of English and composition. Our field’s distancing from linguistics and other language studies (Matsuda “Composition Studies”) has led composition instructors and researchers to feel resistant to (or simply unaware of) arguments on the benefits of familiarizing ourselves with its literature and of discovering ways to borrow from its findings. A subfield of linguistics that centers on social, cultural, political, and rhetorical aspects of languaging, sociolinguistics is already closely aligned to our field’s research and pedagogies. Thus, the course aims to introduce composi-

tion newcomers to the research in sociolinguistics that reveals how languaging works and how social and political dynamics impact language use and users.

Importantly, the three main texts I use are written for newcomers or outsiders, and so the texts offer accessible introductions without overuse of disciplinary-specific knowledge or language. The first text students read is John Edwards *Sociolinguistics: A Very Short Introduction*, which covers the research of the field in a short enough text to make a comprehensive survey manageable and beneficial. In the first half of the text, Edwards discusses the field's findings that demonstrate the undeniable connections between language and identity. This realization alone can be fundamental for composition teachers who may have not fully considered the ways that our assessments of students' language and writing, no matter our best intentions and mindful pedagogies, ultimately function as assessments of students' identities. The second text that students read is Laurie Bauer and Peter Trudgill's *Language Myths*, which can be likened to *Bad Ideas about Writing*, edited by Cheryl E. Ball and Drew M. Loewe. Both are edited collections written for public audiences, with each chapter written by a different expert in the field and focusing on deconstructing a specific myth about language or writing, respectively. As far as I'm concerned, Bauer and Trudgill's text is a must-read for anyone still steeped in harmful myths about the value of language variance, the validity of dialects, and the relationship between grammaticality, communicability, and rhetorical effectiveness.

Finally, the third and most central text in the course is Rosina Lippi-Green's *English with an Accent: Language, Ideology, and Discrimination in the United States*. The textbook reveals and challenges unfounded beliefs that fuel our uncritical acceptance of standard language ideology. In her first chapter, "Linguistic Facts of Life," Lippi-Green unpacks the following notions about language, which are common knowledge in linguistics and sociolinguistics:

- All spoken language changes.
- All spoken languages are equal in linguistic terms.
- Grammaticality does not equal communicative effectiveness.
- Written language and spoken language are historically, structurally, and functionally fundamentally different creatures.
- Variation is intrinsic to all spoken language at every level. (6-7)

These facts, based on empirical research in linguistics, help show how nonsensical it is to try to control and standardize language, to hierarchize languages and their users, to assume standardized grammar is necessary for communication, to conflate our expectations for writing and speaking, and to seek the homogenization of languages. What makes this text so compelling is Lippi-Green's relentlessness in providing case after case of how standard language ideology has guided the subordination of languages and language communi-

ties by way of educational practices and standards, the authorizing endeavors of pundits and teachers, representations of language difference in the media (including children's cartoons), housing and workplace policies, the judicial system, and so much more. This is an important outcome afforded by research in sociolinguistics and especially by this text.

In addition to being more mindful of including sociolinguistics research, SLLE serves as a response to calls for fostering in teachers translanguaging dispositions toward writing (Horner et al.) and for accessing the decades worth of scholarship beyond our field on language theories and pedagogies (Atkinson; Matsuda "Composition Studies"). However, when we in composition studies look to other disciplines (such as sociolinguistics but also education, TESOL, and second language writing) for insights on how language and language teaching works, we should be mindful of the explicitly political and praxis-driven approaches, or lack thereof, that accompany cross-disciplinary research and pedagogy.³ Not all disciplines and researchers are as determined to actively intervene in the ways that standard language ideology serves to hierarchize languages and language users.

We in composition have long recognized that all pedagogies represent and perpetuate certain ideologies of the instructor, department, institution, discipline, and local and cultural contexts. As James Berlin put it in 1988, "a way of teaching is never innocent. Every pedagogy is imbricated in ideology, in a set of tacit assumptions about what is real, what is good, what is possible, and how power ought to be distributed" (492). In the context of our teaching and research, we must acknowledge our own individual subjectivities, how dominant discourses shape our subjectivities, and how that plays out in our work. As indicated above, the design of this course stems from my own political commitments to combat standard language ideology. I realize that in countering standard language ideology through what and how I teach SLLE, I am endorsing and promoting a new competing ideology, one based in critical language studies and critical pedagogies. As I discuss in the next section, among other topics, explicitly embracing and owning a political approach affords various benefits and challenges.

Critical Reflections

SLLE invites examinations of the oft invisible and unacknowledged language ideologies engrained within our institutions, our classrooms, and our very own perspectives and practices. Because such inquiries can be intellectually and emotionally staggering, I aimed to provide various outlets for dialogue and reflection. Alongside weekly seminar discussions, I designed and implemented various avenues for dialogue and reflection, which, from my perspective, were of the most beneficial pedagogical moves I made. Importantly,

I treated “the personal” and storytelling as part of our shared content and practice from the start. This propelled us into interpersonal engagement, and it set the stage for a semester-long commitment to our respective narratives, community building, and critical reflection. At the end of the semester, numerous students cited the practice of sharing narratives as among the most memorable and meaningful moments of the class.

But I found the reflective writing assignments students completed to be the most instrumental to shaping learning. Students wrote four short reflections at various points in the semester wherein they communicated to me thoughts they wanted to share on the course and its content, including but not limited to their interpretations of the texts, their ideas about projects, their questions about sticky concepts, their reactions (positive and negative) to the readings, and, often, personal anecdotes representing a full range of emotions. I wrote each student back, responding to their specific ideas and questions, posing additional questions to consider, providing my own narratives that resonated with theirs, and/or directing them to readings or other resources. At the end of the semester, all students indicated that they found this “pen-pal” assignment to be of the most significant throughout the semester in developing their thinking about the topic as well as enhancing teacher/student communications and fostering individualized mentorship. Then, for their final reflection essay, students revisited and closely analyzed their four reflections, extrapolating the most meaningful developments in their thinking.

As the instructor, I found writing back-and-forth with students to be instrumental in getting to know them and their interests, learning more about their ideas and needs, picking up on issues and questions overlooked or unattended to in class, and providing individualized feedback on a semi-regular basis. While not all students were convinced by the purposes and power of reflection, I concluded that this was an unavoidable and not necessarily unwanted outcome when engaging with such politicized content. I cherished the moments of groundbreaking realizations I witnessed, but I also found invaluable the responses focused more on summarizing readings or those that provided offhand rants over semi-related topics. The choice of topic and style was theirs to make, and I can't assume which approaches would or should prove more meaningful to students.

Challenges with Applying Theory to Practice

Although I'm pleased to report that students' responses to the course have been overwhelmingly positive, there remain various challenges and limitations to the design. A major concern that I continue to grapple with is how to best respond to those students who want to resist standard language ideology but also feel at a loss over how to do so. I realized after teaching a pre-

vious version of the course in 2014 that I offered too few opportunities to brainstorm teaching applications. In response, I designed in 2017 a different major assignment, the praxis project, which tasked students with selecting and exploring a topic we covered in class and then designing a lesson plan demonstrating their applications of theory into practice. The final product was to resemble more or less the very genre in which I'm writing now (although written prospectively rather than retrospectively). While I found the praxis project a worthwhile method for applying sociolinguistics theory to pedagogical design, the assignment needs some rethinking and needs to be supplemented by other opportunities for practical applications. Some students expressed disappointment over not being able to immerse themselves more within certain course topics that interested them, while some of the newer students expressed wanting to get better acquainted with the field and pedagogy more generally before designing and theoretically grounding teaching materials.

After much consideration, and as my appended syllabus shows, I offered students the option to engage in a more exploratory and research-driven project, the extended researched essay, instead of completing the praxis project. This option also provided those students who were unconvinced by or uninterested in arguments for contesting standard language ideology the choice to explore what they felt were more pragmatic topics. Of seventeen students, ten chose the extended researched essay over the praxis project. It's worth noting, however, that this option did not prove to be an "out" for students uncomfortable with the controversies examined in our course. Nine out of ten students who completed the researched essay chose to study more closely standard language ideology (based on Lippi-Green's text) or anti-racist assessment (based on Inoue's *Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies: Teaching and Assessing Writing for a Socially Just Future*), while just one student in the class selected a more general topic in sociolinguistics to investigate. Moving forward, I intend to continue providing both options, despite being worried that opportunities to apply sociolinguistics research to pedagogical design will then be more limited for those who choose the researched essay.

No matter their choice for the final assignment, students seemed to be aligned in their concern over the dominance of standard language ideology but baffled over what will truly help unravel it. And, as I assured them, they are far from alone and have good reason to feel so unsettled. It may feel daunting if not futile when tackling problems in the classroom that are ideologically engrained in the fabric of our society. Furthermore, composition studies has not fully come to terms with standard language ideology, nor have we settled on the best practices that should emerge from contesting the dominance of SE. Thus, I certainly cannot anticipate a seamless process from engagement in

these controversial topics to practical application in my graduate classroom. In future classes, however, I may include scholarship contesting monolingualist ideologies from scholars working in translanguaging, SRTOL, second language writing, basic writing, assessment, transnational literacies, and/or new literacy studies. At the very least, I intend to continue grappling with this dilemma, remaining patient with and forgiving of how incomplete, flawed, or unwieldy our ideas for pedagogical transformation will inevitably be.

Political Teaching and the Emotional Labor that Follows

It's safe to say that most teachers of English language and literacy seek and continue working in this profession with the best intentions to help students harness the language of power. This is certainly the case for graduate students in the L&L program who typically pursue the degree in hopes of attaining teaching positions in New York City programs and institutions that serve primarily people of color, adult English language learners, refugees, immigrants, and the children of immigrants. Serving these populations makes it difficult at times for teachers to come to grips with the effects of unquestioned privileging of SE. In short, it hurts some English instructors to discover that SE, the tool of their trade and source of their expertise, is not linguistically superior and that SE often works to sustain rather than level the socioeconomic gaps in the U.S.

Even knowing this, I was interested in how much time and debate we as a group needed to recognize the myth of SE's superiority and to debunk beliefs that it is more valid, versatile, appropriate, effective, and accessible than other language varieties. I happened to teach Lippi-Green's chapter on "The Standard Language Myth" to L&L students the same week I taught it in my undergraduate composition classrooms. I observed with interest (as did my graduate student teaching mentee who participated in both classroom discussions) how quickly my undergraduate students grasped and concurred with the ideas in this chapter, while my graduate students needed a bit more time to process it and flesh out all their (many) counter arguments.

Explicitly addressing the politics of standard language ideology in any classroom is likely to make the instructor and students feel uncomfortable at times, and not all parties are going to welcome the sort of emotional labor required to "stay" with and emerge out of such discomfort (Micciche). Even instructors and students who willingly devote the affective labors needed to grapple with ideological controversies will find themselves feeling troubled at times with content or conversations surrounding content. The range of stances students took, coupled with the fact that many of our topics were political and controversial, placed additional (but arguably important and fruitful) demands on students as well as me as the instructor. Research that invites teachers of

English to consider the importance of contesting standard language ideology is likely to invite challenges and require more time and different strategies from instructors.

I endeavored to steer classroom dialogue diplomatically without, at the same time, avoiding the productive discomfort that may arise from conflicting stances on the politics of standard language ideology, including my own. There were some students who digested the course with great interest and without any reservations, but most expressed (at some point or another) feeling uneasy, shocked, angry, overwhelmed, even exhausted by the content. In students' written reflections, I heard repeatedly that the content was emotionally draining on them—that, especially when tackling the latter half of Lippi-Green's book, it was just too discouraging for them to keep reading week after week cases where language was used as a tool for discrimination in the U.S. Further, a handful of students shared in their reflections emotional accounts detailing how they had been judged or mistreated due to language differences or, alternatively, how they themselves had judged or mistreated others for the same reason. The new interpretations of past events that were gained when processing course content proved upsetting to some. And since these anecdotes, as mentioned above, often transferred over to classroom discussion, other students were pulled into the emotional labor upon hearing about their classmates' experiences. To be clear, no students indicated experiencing any sort of serious distress requiring special attention or treatment in or beyond the classroom, but it is also safe to assume that the content of the course and the reflection-based assignments invited more affective processing as compared to other courses students had taken in our program.

While I consider the negotiations of emotional labor to be one of the ongoing challenges of this course, I also consider it an essential and necessary feature and, ultimately, a benefit. And I should add that the emotions experienced weren't always grim—far from it. Students frequently expressed feelings of intense curiosity, intrigue, hope, and relief that these topics were being addressed, and determination about coming to terms with standard language ideology in the teaching of English language and literacy. And, of course, not all students delved so emotionally deep into the topics we covered; indeed, two students indicated to me in their final reflection essays that they wished the course focused instead on a more neutral examination of sociolinguistics as a field.

At the end of the semester, one of these students also offered me valuable criticism of the course. The student expressed disapproval of how political the classroom had become and how much agreement there was over the importance of contesting standard language ideology through our approaches to teaching English language and literacy. Although the student appreciated that our

discussions of sociolinguistic theory and pedagogical practice were centered on social justice, a focus the student likewise appreciated, the student worried that emphasizing the reshaping of pedagogies to suit the linguistic needs and strengths of oppressed groups would eventually work to reverse (rather than level) social, racial, and linguistic hierarchies. I explained that the student was not alone in this concern and that similar criticisms had been made recently against translanguaging approaches to writing (see Jordan; Matsuda “The Lure”; Shipka). We spent time together discussing how revealing injustice and working to dismantle oppressive ideologies and practices does not and should not equate to, as Jody Shipka puts it in her discussion of translanguaging and transmodality, “inverting existing hierarchies, substituting one set of sign systems, meaning-making strategies, and communicative technologies for another while working to denigrate what has come before” (255-56). I emphasized this point by referring to the work of feminists and racial justice workers, who aim to end inequality, not attain superiority for women and people of color. Our dialogue was collegial and seemed fruitful. I find this student’s perspective important and I’ll be sure to raise it more explicitly when I teach the course again.

I intend to continue being explicit about my political position on advocating for new pedagogical approaches in light of what sociolinguists have uncovered about the oppressive nature of SE. I will continue to invite and respect perspectives that conflict with my and others’ stances, and I will emphasize that while the choice for what to do with this information is theirs to make, we can no longer ignore or deny the oppressive realities of SE and our role as teachers in maintaining its privileged status. Finally, I am interested in seeing the content of this course be transferred to one of the L&L MA program’s required courses, Introduction to Language, making the sociopolitics of language and standard language ideology more central to our students’ introductory inquiries. My greater hope, however, is that other instructors across institutions will likewise work to see examinations of sociolinguistics and standard language ideology become a regularly offered course topic in composition graduate programs.

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Notes

1. The official title and description for this course at City College is as follows: English B6100, “Sociolinguistics: Variation in language from a social, linguistic and cultural orientation.”

2. See the works of Suresh Canagarajah, Keith Gilyard, Nancy H. Hornberger, Bruce Horner, Braj B. Kachru, Ryuko Kubota, Rosina Lippi-Green, Min-Zhan Lu,

James Milroy, Leslie Milroy, Alastair Pennycook, Robert Phillipson, James Sledd, Geneva Smitherman, John Trimbur, Victor Villanueva, Terrence G. Wiley, Walt Wolfram, and Vershawn Ashanti Young, among many others.

3. In particular, I found myself struggling some with teaching John Edward's book, *A Short Introduction to Sociolinguistics* given his disavowing of more critical approaches to studying and revitalizing languages. Of course, it was useful to have students engage this perspective because it is part of a much larger trend whereby scholars *observe what is* rather than *take a stance and intervene in what's problematic*. Because of the inevitable but important epistemological and political differences across fields of study, interdisciplinary readings can require more time unpacking the histories and ideologies that inform the scholarship and scholars we read.

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Syllabus: Sociolinguistics for the Language & Literacy Educator

Description and Trajectory

In this course, we will study some of the ways language and society are entangled, and we will explore how and why teachers of language and literacy might better understand and address such interrelations. Sociolinguistics provides an important backdrop for understanding the social dynamics behind how language is used, perceived, and treated in the U.S. and beyond. It provides opportunities to critically examine societal structures and attitudes surrounding language (including our own beliefs) that create and uphold social hierarchies—a worthwhile pursuit for any educator. As teachers of language and literacy, we are implicated by these and other social, linguistic, raced, gendered, and political realities, which not only affect our students and us but also reflect and maintain our pedagogies and the educational systems in which we participate.

We'll begin with a survey of the field's collective knowledge on cultural perceptions of language; the bonds between identity and language; linguistic histories, variance, and change; as well as the social and political dynamics of accents, dialects, and multilingualism. Building from this knowledge, we will study (and interrogate) an array of linguistic myths, such as the myth of non-accents, the myth of standard language, and the myth of nonstandardized varieties being inadequate, and we'll consider what sociolinguists say about how language is used in the U.S. to identify, subordinate, and discriminate against groups of people. Later, we'll examine the implications of sociolinguistics and standard language ideology as they apply to assessment practices in rhetoric and composition. Throughout, you will complete a variety of reading response and reflection assignments as well as a research project wherein you apply some of your new knowledge to synthesize themes and design teaching materials.

Course Outcomes

In this class, you will

- acquire broad knowledge of the scope of sociolinguistic research and theory
- acquire deep knowledge of contemporary sociolinguistic theories, including critical language studies and language ideology
- conduct independent research on topics in sociolinguistics and write essays to explore disciplinary knowledge and gain deeper understandings of pedagogical theory and practice

- recognize how experiential learning about language / literacy inform your work as teachers and your students' lives as learners

Course Texts and Materials

Bauer, Laurie, and Peter Trudgill. *Language Myths*. Penguin UK, 1998. ISBN: 978-0140260236

Edwards, John. *Sociolinguistics: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford UP, 2013. ISBN: 978-0199858613

Greenfield, Laura. "The 'Standard English' Fairy Tale: A Rhetorical Analysis of Racist Pedagogies and Commonplace Assumptions about Language Diversity." *Writing Centers and the New Racism: A call for Sustainable Dialogue and Change*, edited by Laura Greenfield and Karen Rowan, Utah State UP, 2011, pp. 33-60.

Inoue, Asao. *Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies: Teaching and Assessing Writing for a Socially Just Future*. Parlor Press, 2015. ISBN: 978-1602357730. Download free PDF version here: wac.colostate.edu/books/inoue/ecologies.pdf.

Lippi-Green, Rosina. *English With an Accent: Language, Ideology, and Discrimination in the United States*, 2nd edition. Routledge, 2012. ISBN: 978-0415559119

Villanueva, Victor. "Blind: Talking about the New Racism." *Writing Center Journal*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2006, 3-19.

Journals Relative to Our Course

Useful journals in sociolinguistics: *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, *Language in Society*, *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, *Narrative Inquiry*, *American Speech*, *Multilingua: Journal of Cross-Cultural and Interlanguage Communication*, *Intercultural Pragmatics*.

Useful journals in the fields of TESOL and Second Language Writing: *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *Journal of Second Language Teaching and Research*, *TESOL Journal*, *TESOL Quarterly*.

Useful journals in the field of Composition and Rhetoric: *Composition Studies*, *Composition Forum*, *College English*, *College Composition and Communication*, *Writing on the Edge*, *Journal of Basic Writing*, *The Journal of Writing Assessment*.

Other useful journals available online: *Critical Race Theory in Education*, *The Freire Project: International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, *Pedagogy*.

Descriptions of Major Assignments

Reading Notes (10%). The goal for this task is for us to work together to keep a record of our readings and discussions—information that we can build on and refer to as needed. You will be the “Note Taker” for one of our class periods, and your task is twofold: First, you will compile in a single document a 400-500-word summary of the portion of that week’s readings you’re responsible for (there will be 2 note takers per class), a list of key words with definitions, 2-5 important quotations, and a complete citation. Use headings to help organize and present information and post these notes to our Blackboard Discussion Board Forum >24 hours before our class meets. Second, you will collaborate with the other note taker to compile notes for that class discussion (noting that day’s events, the main topics of discussion, any important questions posed, any announcements, etc.). Please word-process these notes, paste your Personal Responses (see below) as the introduction, include your names and the date, and post the document as a thread under the week’s Forum within 48 hours of our class meeting. For both of your BB posts, please copy/paste your summary and attach it as a .doc or .rtf text file.

Personal Responses (10%). You will be assigned as a “Responder” the same day you are a “Note Taker.” As a responder, you are tasked with composing a short (<260-word) response that you will read aloud the day it’s due. Responses can take any form and be as (in)formal or (non)standard as you like. The only requirement is that your response is *inspired* by that week’s readings, and that you can read it aloud in two minutes or less. But I do encourage you all to make it personal; it is *your response* after all. Poetry, ranting, sampling, and storytelling are most welcome! Know that we likely will not explicitly address responses in class after they’re shared; instead, the goal is for your voices and perspectives to set the tone of each class and to get us thinking.

Reflections (15%). This semester you will write four short reflections (each should be ≥250 words). These must be printed and submitted in class the day they are due. The four due dates on the calendar correspond to the group you’re assigned (and so I will determine groups the first day of class). In the reflection, your task is simply to communicate to me (and me alone) some of the ideas you’re drawn to (or wrestling with) in this course and to ask any questions you may have. The goal is for you and me to be in regular communication about your learning, and so I will be responding to each of your reflections. I’m not particular about exact word counts here, but I am asking that you shoot for 250+ words, that you word process your reflection,

and that you fit it on one side of one sheet of paper. Feel free to adjust font, margins, and spacing as needed. I'll use the blank side of the page to respond to you.

Final Reflection Essay (15%). This assignment is an extended analysis of and discussion on your semester's reflections. Your goal is to take stock of your most meaningful thinking and learning this semester in hopes that you might better articulate, concretize, and preserve your new knowledge and perspectives. There are two requirements: 1) *Articulate explicitly* the ways in which your perceptions of sociolinguistics, language ideology, and the teaching of language and literacy have evolved; and 2) *Provide evidence* (quoting your previous reflections or narrating specific learning moments) to show how you have developed as a thinker and teacher. In the case that you feel you have not evolved in your thinking and learning, identify and explain (with evidence) the ways in which you have not progressed (either because you didn't spend enough time with the materials or you feel that you had a strong start in those areas). The reflection essay should be 1250-1500 words.

Praxis Project or Extended Research Essay (50%). See the assignment prompts below for more details.

Assignment Prompt: Praxis Project

Part of being a knowledgeable and effective literacy and language teacher is working to ensure your teaching practices are informed by pedagogical research and theory. This Praxis Project challenges you to do just that. For this project, you will inquire more deeply into one of the topics covered in (or closely related to) our course for the purposes of (1) writing a short *Researched Essay*; and (2) using your new knowledge to design a *lesson plan* for a specific language or literacy teaching situation.

Your goal for the *Researched Essay* (2000-2500 words) is to *represent* and *respond* to a narrow topic of inquiry circulating in research on the teaching of language and literacy, a topic that connects to or is implicated by sociolinguistic research. You'll *represent* the topic by summarizing and synthesizing some of the theories and findings from our readings and from your own research. You will also *respond* to your source use by introducing ideas, contextualizing sources, drawing connections across texts, and providing *your own* interpretations, experiences, analyses, claims, and conclusions. The essay should

- engage in complicated and contemporary ways of thinking about the social and political aspects of teaching language and literacy;

- include close work with the texts, in which you summarize specific ideas from the texts and select key passages to closely examine or to use as evidence for your ideas;
- include synthesis of sources, in which you make clear the relationship across sources (does one idea from one source *illustrate*, *extend*, *contest*, or *complicate* an idea from another source?);
- make explicit your interpretations and stance on the topic in relation to the key passages from the sources on which you're drawing (If I had to quantify how much of the essay should be devoted to *your* ideas, *your* interpretations, *your* thinking, I'd say about 40%.);
- be organized so that readers are effectively oriented to the specific topic of inquiry, guided through your synthesis of themes/sources, and presented with conclusions that illustrate the implications of your research, review, and analysis; and
- be edited for clarity and formatted to meet MLA or APA style guidelines.

Your goal for the *Lesson Plan* (another 500-750 words + lesson materials) is to apply the new pedagogical knowledge you've gained from the scholarship synthesized in your Researched Essay to design and describe a lesson plan for any imagined or real language or literacy teaching situation. If you are already teaching language or literacy, you are encouraged to design context-specific materials that you actually intend to use. You are also welcome to adapt a lesson plan that you've discovered or that you've used in the past. Your Lesson Plan should

- demonstrate your ability to apply theory in your teaching practice;
- include explicit mention of class objectives, connections to course goals, and the various procedures and time allotments set for introducing, executing, and concluding the lesson;
- present information so that unfamiliar teachers could effectively adopt/adapt your lesson;
- include any relevant supporting materials (i.e., readings, handouts, images, clips, prompts);
- be preceded by a 500-750 foreword that accomplishes the following: introduce the type of lesson and materials you will provide, their intended outcomes, and the value they aim to offer; describe in detail the teaching context in which the materials are intended; narrate your intentions for how the lesson should be carried out; and reflect on the pedagogical benefits and potential limitations of

the materials, explicitly referring back to the literature you reviewed in your Researched Essay.

Selecting your topic. Your first task is to decide on a topic of inquiry. You have 3 options:

1. Language ideology in the language/writing classroom (drawing on Lippi-Green).
2. Anti-racist assessment in the language/writing classroom (drawing on Inoue).
3. Another theoretical topic of your choice that deals with inclusion and/or diversity initiatives in the language or writing classroom (e.g., universal design; critical pedagogy and problem-posing education; etc.). Run idea(s) by me.

Researching your topic. You are required to draw on Lippi-Green or Inoue (either one chapter or smaller excerpts from across the chapters) and then to locate an additional four journal articles or book chapters connected to the topic you choose. Meticulously select sources so that you not only have *enough* sources but also have the *best* sources to nuance your discussion. See the syllabus for a list of useful journals.

Drafting a Proposal. For your first written product due for this assignment, you'll draft a proposal (worth 5% of your final grade and due on BB). Your proposal should accomplish the following in 2-3 pages: *Introduce* and contextualize the topic you're taking up. Briefly explain the significance of this topic of investigation (to you, this class, the field, or larger social issues). *Summarize* your plans for drawing on research articles to describe some of the major issues your topic addresses and your ideas for designing a lesson plan. *Provide* a bibliography of eight potential journal articles or book chapters you may use for this project. Use complete MLA or APA citation style. Note: It is not necessary to read all of your sources before writing this proposal. For now, skim over each to make sure it is reputable and relevant.

Drafting an Annotated Bibliography. In your AB (worth 5% of your final grade and due on BB), begin with an updated summary of your project's goals (see #s 1 and 2 above) and then provide the following for each of the five sources you intend to use: a correct MLA or APA Citation; a concise summary of the source's main argument, purpose, and evidence; a brief reflection on how the source fits into your research (how does this source help *illustrate, extend,*

contest, or *complicate* the issue you're investigating?); a quotable quote or two (with page numbers). Each entry should be ~250 words.

Drafting, workshopping, and finalizing your Praxis Project. Based on this prompt, you may rightly assume I'm a big fan of scaffolding writing assignments. And I believe it's especially important to take full advantage of any opportunity for peer review. We'll dedicate class time to workshopping a *full* draft (>1750 words + lesson plan) of your Praxis Project (*worth 10%* of your final grade and due on BB). Your final draft is due two weeks later (*worth 30%* of your final grade and due on BB). It should be carefully revised, edited, and formatted, and should include a separate works cited or bibliography page.

Assignment Prompt: Extended Researched Essay

Rather than completing the Praxis Project, you have the option of engaging instead in a more traditional research project, the Extended Researched Essay. For the Extended Researched Essay, you are tasked with inquiring more deeply into *any topic* of your choice covered in either John Edwards's book, *Sociolinguistics: A Very Short Introduction*, or Rosina Lippi-Green's *English with an Accent: Language, Ideology, and Discrimination in the United States*.

Your goal for the *Extended Researched Essay* (2500-3000 words) is to *represent* and *respond* to a narrow topic of inquiry circulating in sociolinguistic research. See the Praxis Project prompt's section on the "Researched Essay" for a list of criteria required for completing the essay.

Selecting your topic. First, select a specific, contemporary sociolinguistics topic or theory from Edwards or Lippi-Green that you'd like to further investigate. What's most important (and useful) is to choose an issue that you are genuinely interested in or curious about. Please run your ideas by me.

Researching your topic. You are required to draw on Edwards or Lippi-Green (either one chapter or smaller excerpts from across the chapters) and then to locate an additional five journal articles or book chapters related to your topic. Your sources should be meticulously selected to ensure you not only have *enough* sources but also have the *best* sources to nuance your inquiry. See the Praxis Project prompt for a list of useful journals in sociolinguistics.

Drafting a Proposal, Annotated Bibliography, and Extended Researched Essay: See the Praxis Project prompt for details.

Course Calendar

WEEK/DATE	READING DUE	WRITING DUE
Week 1	Introductions to the course and to each other Review syllabus. Buy textbooks.	
Week 2 <i>Survey 1 of Sociolinguistics</i>	<u>Edwards, <i>Sociolinguistics</i>, pp. 1-60</u> Ch 1 Coming to Terms Ch 2 Variation and Change Ch 3 Perceptions of Language Ch 4 Protecting Language	Take notes on 'takeaways'
Week 3 <i>Survey 2 of Sociolinguistics</i>	<u>Edwards, <i>Sociolinguistics</i>, pp. 61-118</u> Ch 5 Languages Great and Small Ch 6 Loyalty, Maintenance, Shift, Loss, and Revival Ch 7 Multilingualism Ch 8 Name, Sex, and Religion	Take notes on 'takeaways' G1 Reflection 1
Week 4 <i>Linguistic Facts of Life</i>	<u>Lippi-Green, <i>English with an Accent</i>, pp. xix-xxii; 1-26</u> Preface + Introduction: Language Ideology or Science Fiction? Ch 1 The Linguistic Facts of Life Bauer & Trudgill, <i>Language Myths</i> , pp. 1-8; 50-57; 77-84 Myth 1 Meanings of Words Should Not be Allowed to Vary... Myth 7 Some Languages Are Harder than Others Myth 8 Children Can't Speak or Write Properly Any More Myth 10 Some Languages Have No Grammar	G2 Reflection 1
Week 5 <i>Myths about Accents and Standards</i>	<u>Lippi-Green, <i>English with an Accent</i>, pp. 27-65</u> Ch 2 Language in Motion Ch 3 The Myth of Non-Accent Ch 4 The Standard Language Myth Bauer & Trudgill, <i>Language Myths</i> , pp. 9-14; 169-182 Myth 2 Some Languages are Just Not Good Enough Myth 20 Everyone Has an Accent Except Me Myth 21 America is Ruining the English Language	G1 Reflection 2
Week 6 <i>Language Ideology in Action 1</i>	<u>Lippi-Green, <i>English with an Accent</i>, pp. 66-129</u> Ch 5 Language Subordination Ch 6 The Educational System: Fixing the Message in Stone Ch 7 Teaching Children How to Discriminate	G2 Reflection 2

WEEK/DATE	READING DUE	WRITING DUE
Week 7 <i>More Language Myths</i>	<u>Bauer & Trudgill, <i>Language Myths</i>, pp. 15-22; 32-49; 85-131; 139-149</u> Myth 3 The Media Are Ruining English Myth 5 English Spelling is Kattastroffik Myth 6 Women Talk too Much Myth 11 Italian is Beautiful, German is Ugly Myth 12 Bad Grammar is Slovenly Myth 13 Black Children are Verbally Deprived Myth 14 Double Negatives Are Illogical Myth 15 TV Makes People Sound the Same Myth 17 They Speak Really Bad English Down South & in NYC	Participate on Blackboard Discussion Board
Week 8 <i>Language, Race, and Writing</i>	<u>Villanueva, "The Rhetorics of the New Racism..." pp. 1-21</u> <u>Greenfield, "The 'Standard English' Fairy Tale..." pp. 33-60</u> <u>Inoue, <i>Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies</i>, pp. 3-24</u> Introduction: Writing Assessment Ecologies as Antiracist Projects	G1 Reflection 3
Week 9 <i>Race and Writing Assessment</i>	<u>Inoue, <i>Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies</i>, pp. 25-118</u> Ch 1 The Function of Race in Writing Assessment Ch 2 Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies All read 77-85; then choose one of the next three sections: "As more than" (86-93), "As Interconnected" (93-104), or "As Marxian Ecology" (104-115); and then all read 115-118.	G2 Reflection 3
Week 10 <i>Language Ideology in Action 2</i>	<u>Lippi-Green, <i>English with an Accent</i>, pp. 130-181; 322-331</u> Ch 8 The Information Industry Ch 9 Real People with a Real Language... Ch 17 Case Study 2: Profiling and Housing	Proposal Due*
Week 11	<u>Read your selected sources and prepare annotated bib</u>	Annotated Bibliography
Week 12 <i>U.S. Language Differences 1</i>	<u>Lippi-Green, <i>English with an Accent</i>, pp. 182-234; 303-321</u> Ch 10 The Real Trouble with Black Language Ch 11 Hillbillies, Hicks, and Southern Belles: The Language Rebels Ch 16 Case Study 1: Moral Panic in Oakland	G1 Reflection 4

WEEK/DATE	READING DUE	WRITING DUE
Week 13 <i>U.S. Language Differences 2</i>	<u>Lippi-Green, <i>English with an Accent</i>, pp. 235-302</u> Ch 12 Defying Paradise: Hawai'i Ch 13 The Other in the Mirror Ch 14 ¡Ya Basta! Ch 15 The Unassimilable Races: What it Means to be Asian	G2 Reflection 4
Week 14 <i>Drafting</i>	<u>Lippi-Green, <i>English with an Accent</i>, pp. 332-335</u> Conclusion: Civil (Dis)Obedience and the Shadow of Language	<u>Full</u> Draft of Final Project Print 3 copies
Week 15 <i>Conclusions</i>	Course Evaluations, In-Class Reflections, Celebrations	<u>Final</u> Reflection Essay
Finals Week	No class	<u>Final</u> Draft of Final Project