

Kennesaw State University

From the Selected Works of Chris C. Palmer

January, 2019

Teaching Language Variation in the Classroom: Strategies and Models from Teachers and Linguists

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Available at: https://works.bepress.com/chris_c_palmer/10/

Teaching Language Variation in the Classroom

Bringing together the varied and multifaceted expertise of teachers and linguists in one accessible volume, this book presents practical tools, grounded in cutting-edge research, for teaching about language and language diversity in the ELA classroom. By demonstrating practical ways teachers can implement research-driven linguistic concepts in their own teaching environment, each chapter offers real-world lessons as well as clear methods for instructing students on the diversity of language. Written for pre-service and in-service teachers, this book includes easy-to-use lesson plans, pedagogical strategies and activities, as well as a wealth of resources carefully designed to optimize student comprehension of language variation.

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Strategies and Models from
Teachers and Linguists

Edited by Michelle D. Devereaux
and Chris C. Palmer

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How to Use This Book

The chapters in this volume have been ordered purposefully so that the book can be read from beginning to end—each chapter adds to the discussions of those that come before and after it. However, there are also chapters across the parts of this volume that can be grouped by various topics. Below we offer a summary of each chapter and then list chapters that foreground discussion of specific topics. Finally, we provide a list of lesson plans and other teaching materials appearing in the volume or on its related eResources site.

Chapter Summaries

Part 1: Teachers' Perspectives

Part 1 highlights the voices of secondary teachers, inviting them to share how they already teach language and language ideologies in their classrooms. Each teacher provides a lesson plan at the end of their chapter to demonstrate what their practice looks like. These educators represent a wide variety of schools and regions in the country, including public and private schools from the West Coast, Southwest, Southeast, and New England.

“Word Crimes” and Linguistic Ideology: Examining Student Ideas about Language in the English Language Arts Classroom

Amy L. Plackowski, Hudson High School, Massachusetts

Amy L. Plackowski offers core questions that should be grappled with in any language study curriculum and shares specific activities she does in her own classroom, including discussion of examples from audiovisual media and pop culture.

Prescriptive and Descriptive Lenses: How a Teacher Worked with Local Linguists to Develop a Language Ideologies Unit

Andrew Bergdahl, Stoneleigh-Burnham School, Massachusetts

Andrew Bergdahl outlines a unit on descriptive and prescriptive attitudes toward language that he put together with guidance from linguists he contacted at his local university.

Profiling, Prejudice, and Prestige: Language Ideologies across Contexts

Stacy Ishigaki Arevalo, Eastside College Preparatory School, California

Stacy Ishigaki Arevalo describes a unit that covers the topics of dialect, register, code-switching, and linguistic profiling with texts such as Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

“Working With” Instead of “Pushing Against”: Meeting Testing Standards while Teaching Language Ideologies

Mike Williams, Joseph Wheeler High School, Georgia, and Dundalk High School, Maryland

Mike Williams describes how a school-wide symposium on the N-word began his journey toward teaching language in critical ways, such as discussing language choices in “Dry September” by William Faulkner, while still meeting the required standards.

“Mr. D, Is This, Like, a Real Word?” Stories of a Linguist in a High School English Classroom

John A. Damaso, Brophy College Preparatory, Arizona

John A. Damaso provides a series of vignettes—from teaching traditional literature (e.g., *The Great Gatsby*) to discussing language with dictionaries, flashcards, games—outlining the strategies and challenges of balancing his dual role as a language authority in the classroom (both linguist and English teacher).

Linguistics in an English Language Arts Class: Elevating Language Awareness

Beth Keyser, Superior High School, Montana

Beth Keyser shows how she uses word parts (i.e., morphology) and word groupings (i.e., syntax and grammar) to teach students the sense, the order, and the possibilities of the English language.

Using Music to Bridge Language Diversity

Jillian Ratti, McMinn County High School, Tennessee

Jillian Ratti describes a different kind of diversity in her East Tennessee high school and shares how a March Madness-style unit incorporates music to build upon the language diversity in her classroom.

Power, Society, and Identity: Language and Life in a Ninth-Grade English Classroom

Holly Hoover, Kennesaw Mountain High School, Georgia

Holly Hoover shares her journey as a new teacher learning how to approach language ideologies in her classroom and describes how she now pairs language-ideology instruction with Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

Language Awareness in Education: A Linguist's Response to Teachers

Walt Wolfram, NC State University, North Carolina

Walt Wolfram considers the common ways language variation and ideologies have been addressed in the teachers' chapters in Part 1, discusses the teaching profiles of the teachers who have undertaken this work, and concludes with potential ideas for expanding on this work in the future.

Part 2: Linguists' Perspectives

Part 2 features linguists sharing instructional ideas for teachers, moving beyond the theory of *why* to *how* to teach language and language ideologies. The authors address various practical considerations for implementing these ideas, as well as the purposes and benefits that a focus on language variation and ideology can have for both students and teachers.

Principles to Navigate the Challenges of Teaching English Language Variation: A Guide for Nonlinguists

Mike Metz, University of Missouri, Missouri

Mike Metz, emphasizing that teachers do not need to be experts in linguistics, outlines several guiding principles for teaching language variation and provides several examples of how these principles can be applied to the various strands of ELA.

Teaching Linguistic Diversity as the Rule Rather than the Exception

Anne Lobeck, Western Washington University, Washington

Anne Lobeck discusses how she uses prescriptive and descriptive grammar to teach language variation and language ideologies in her linguistics course for pre-service teachers.

DARE(ing) Language Ideologies: Exploring Linguistic Diversity through Audio Data and Literature in Secondary Language Arts Courses

Kelly D. Abrams, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Wisconsin, and Trini Stickle, Western Kentucky University, Kentucky

Kelly D. Abrams and Trini Stickle discuss several activities that ask students to wrestle with linguistic prejudice by analyzing written/literary and oral/real-life representations of dialect.

Bringing Critical Language Pedagogy to the Middle School Social Studies Classroom: Lessons for Standard English Learners

Jessica Hatcher and Jeffrey Reaser, NC State University, North Carolina

Jessica Hatcher and Jeffrey Reaser discuss their work in a social studies classroom where they incorporated sociolinguistic information and employed critical

language pedagogy; these lessons can be easily adapted to ELA classrooms in secondary education settings.

Grammar in the Spanish/English Bilingual Classroom: Three Methods for Teaching Academic Language

Mary Hudgens Henderson, Winona State University, Minnesota

Mary Hudgens Henderson describes how tools such as linguistic inquiry and contrastive analysis can help students explore nonstandard varieties of Spanish and how they can help students distinguish differences in the writing conventions of English and Spanish.

Attitude Change Is Not Enough: Changing Teacher Practice to Disrupt Dialect Prejudice in the Classroom

Rebecca Wheeler, Christopher Newport University, Virginia

Rebecca Wheeler details step-by-step classroom methods to analyze the written vernacular patterns common in communities speaking African American Vernacular English, demonstrating how one might take tangible steps to break the cycle of dominant language ideology in U.S. classrooms.

Extending the Conversation: Two Teachers' Response to Linguists

Suzanne Loosen and Teaira McMurtry, Milwaukee Public Schools, Wisconsin

Suzanne Loosen and Teaira McMurtry address the challenges and solutions described by the linguists in Part 2, discuss prerequisites needed to implement their recommendations, and consider how linguists and teachers can collaborate toward these solutions.

Part 3: Collaborations between Teachers and Linguists

The third part of this volume presents four pairs of teacher–linguist collaborators. In each case, the teacher and linguist have worked together to design lessons for the ELA classroom, with each pair co-writing a chapter that offers practical strategies for teaching linguistic variation and/or ideology.

Using Digital Resources to Teach Language Variation in the Midwest

Amanda Sladek, University of Nebraska-Kearney at Nebraska, and Mattie Lane, West High School, Iowa

Amanda Sladek and Mattie Lane provide strategies for using digital resources to teach dialectal variation; they also discuss adaptations each instructor made to this material, accounting for student needs, core curriculum standards, larger pedagogical goals, and other contextual/institutional factors at the high school and university levels.

How Power Reveals and Directs Teacher Language Ideologies with High-Achieving African American Students in a Secondary English Classroom

Tanji Reed Marshall, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Virginia, and Chrystal Seawood, Washington Leadership Academy, Washington DC

Tanji Reed Marshall and Chrystal Seawood explore the relationship between teachers' language ideologies and the dynamics of power that impact instructional decision-making and delivery with high-achieving African American students.

Sustained Linguistic Inquiry as a Means of Confronting Language Ideology and Prejudice

Kristin Denham, Western Washington University, Washington, and David Pippin, Young Achievers Science and Math Pilot School, Massachusetts

Kristin Denham and David Pippin explain how they teach linguistics through scientific inquiry, demonstrating how syllable instruction can help students better understand and respect the nuances of both language use and language varieties.

"Standard" English, "Classic" Literature: Examining Canonical and Linguistic Ideologies in Huck Finn

Jeanne Dyches, Iowa State University, Iowa, and Cameron Gale, West Des Moines Community Schools, Iowa

Jeanne Dyches and Cameron Gale draw on models grounded in participatory action research and discuss the planning and implementation of lessons around *Huck Finn* that help students understand the power dynamics that permeate language practices and canonical traditions.

Topics

Selected chapters have been organized below into topical groups, demonstrating how different courses of study might use this book. These groupings are meant to be a rough guide rather than an exhaustive listing of all topics covered and of all chapters touching on each topic. (Readers who don't see a topic they have in mind are encouraged to use the index to seek out other topical threads among chapters.) The primary goal here is to demonstrate how instructors may envision using this volume for different types of courses, units, activities, or other classroom ideas.

Literature

- Arevalo (pp. 18–24)
- Williams (pp. 25–31)
- Damaso (pp. 32–38)
- Keyser (pp. 39–46)
- Hoover (pp. 54–60)
- Abrams and Stickle (pp. 84–92)
- Sladek and Lane (pp. 129–137)
- Dyches and Gale (pp. 157–164)