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Kitchen-Table Talk: Creating Authentic Engagement in K-12 Classrooms

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Kitchen-Table Talk: Creating Authentic Engagement in K-12 Classrooms



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Senior Capstone
Division of Humanities and Communication
Spring 2016

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GabPRR. "Falling Asleep at the Kitchen Table." 5 December 2012. Online Image. Flickr

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English Subject Matter Preparation
Division of Humanities and Communication
Research Essay and Instructional Unit Plan
Dr. Lee Ritscher
Spring 2016

I'd like to acknowledge Dr. Jennifer Fletcher for being sublime.

This project is dedicated to my husband,
who never misses dinner,
to Sir Beef Wellington, who always met us at the table,
and to anyone who has ever struggled to find their voice.
Take a seat at your kitchen-table,
tell us who you are.

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Capstone Project Proposal

1. Provide your name and identify your area of concentration

Megan Williamson, Human Communication Major, Concentration in English Subject Matter Preparation

2. Focus: Identify the *specific* issue, problem, or question addressed in your essay. Be sure to frame as a question. Briefly explain why you chose this focus area.

How do we create a space in the classroom for students' "kitchen table" languages/dialects? How do I, as a future teacher, create an equitable environment for language variations? As I near completion of my undergraduate study and face entering a credential program, I am interesting in developing my understanding of how to honor and incorporate students' differences in the classroom. How do I make the transition from student, trained to engage primarily in Academic English, to a teacher who must engage a variety of student dialects?

3. Alignment with Common Theme: Provide a *concise overview* of your project's *direct alignment* with this semester's shared theme of inquiry.

Language is inextricably linked with race and class. The way we speak connotes a multitude of information about our identity. Language is a social justice issue, as classrooms often exist as a place where linguistic discrimination takes place. In a society that reveres Standard and Academic English, little room is made for the appreciation of students' unique home language, instead of considered relevant teachers often teach to change a student's kitchen table in language and align their usage with the societal preference.

4. Purpose: What is your project's primary purpose? What do you hope to accomplish through this project?

The primary purpose of this research is to promote linguistic equality in the classroom. I hope to gain a greater understanding of how language is linked to identity and in turn how that understanding can guide me to be an effective teacher. I hope to create a safe space for a variety of dialects and promote this idea for others to adopt in their classrooms.

5. Capstone Title: What is your project's working title?

Kitchen Table Talk: Linguistic Diversity in the K-12 Classroom

6. Working Summary: Provide a one-paragraph working summary of your project...

Though there are many dialects of the English language used throughout the United States (and the world), none are prized over Standard and Academic English. This is problematic as the student population in California is increasingly more linguistically diverse. As more and more K-12 students are speaking English as a second language, they often fall behind in reaching proficiency in Academic English. Native English speakers as well struggle in proficiency, as students often have limited exposure to the Academic dialect outside of the classroom. Is it necessary for students to acquire this dialect? Or is there room in academia for more diverse linguistic representation? Perhaps it is not a matter of helping students acquire Academic English, but a matter of academia acquiring and accepting students' "kitchen table" languages. The kitchen table language is the register, style, and thus dialect, we as humans use when conversing with our family and friends in the most comfortable setting. An expanse of learning, community, knowledge, and understanding is acquired at the kitchen table. How can we bridge the gap from table to desk for today's students?

7. Sources: Address each of the following:

- In order to complete your project, what additional knowledge, insights, skills, understanding, and/or other resources and tools do you anticipate needing?
- Describe the kinds of primary and/or secondary sources you intend to use for your inquiry. This could include collecting original oral histories, analyzing government statistics, consulting scholarly peer-reviewed articles, books, and websites, among others. If you have consulted sources to get started, list them here.

I anticipate I will need to do research regarding language acquisition and classroom strategy. I will likely examine various educational theories. Additionally, I believe I will need to look into the history of linguistic discrimination in K-12 education and what suggestions have already been made in addressing this injustice. I will need to access educational research as well as state statistics regarding the demographics of California schools. Some sources I have already consulted include:

Andrews, Larry. *Language Exploration and Awareness: A Resource Book for Teachers*. Mahwah, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1998. Print.

Baxter, Milton, and Rochelle Holland. "Addressing The Needs Of Students Who Speak A Nonstandard English Dialect." *Adult Basic Education And Literacy Journal* 1.3 (2007): 145-153. ERIC.

Christensen, Linda. "The Politics of Correction: How We Can Nurture Students in Their Writing and Help Them Learn the Language of Power." *The Quarterly* 25.4 (2003) Print.

Scarcella, Robin C. *Accelerating Academic English: A Focus on the English Learner*. Oakland: University of California P, 2003. Print.

Wheeler, Rebecca S., and Rachel Swords. "Codeswitching: Tools of Language and Culture Transform the Dialectally Diverse Classroom." *Language Arts* 81.6 (2004): 470-79. Print.

8. Next Steps: What steps will you need to take to meet your project's expectations, including preparation of all required deliverables? (be as specific as possible)

My first step will be defining my concept “kitchen table language.” I will write a working definition of this term. Secondly, I will need to begin consulting theories of language acquisition and educational theory to gain grounding in the ways in which students learn. Third, I will need to examine just how diverse the current K-12 population is and assess this in terms of the types of linguistics discrimination that most often occurs. From this point I will need to continue my research and begin writing. Additionally, I will need to begin crafting my lesson plan in terms of how a K-12 teacher can embrace students’ kitchen table dialects while teaching.

9. Timeline: Provide a detailed (and realistic) timeline for completion of each step required to meet the project’s expectations.

February—begin research, write a research questions, brainstorm lesson plan ideas

March 1—Begin narrowing research around a specific educational and language acquisition theory, start annotated bibliography

March 9—Complete annotated bibliography

March 21—Complete outline of research paper, and begin writing

March 28—Complete 5-7 pages of research paper over spring break, begin developing lesson plan

March 28—Meet with Dr. Fletcher

April 11—Complete research paper, complete 50% of lesson plan

April 15—Complete lesson plan and begin review process

April 18—Conduct peer review on paper and lesson plan

April 25—Professor review, Dr. Lee and Dr. Fletcher

April 27—Purchase poster supplies, begin drafting speech for festival if selected

April 25- May 6—Conduct several peer and professor review sessions of completed research paper, finish cohesive lesson plan

May 6-9—Finish essay and lesson plan revisions, complete festival poster

May 13-15—Review, finalize, finish poster, submit capstone

Kitchen-Table Talk: Creating Authentic Engagement in K-12 Classrooms

We are our most authentic selves at our kitchen tables. It is in this intimate space in which we make discoveries about who we are. The great Native American poet Joy Harjo in her poem “Perhaps the World Ends Here” states, “The world begins at a kitchen table/...It is here that children are given instructions on what it means to be human. We make men at it, we make women” (1, 6-7). The kitchen table is a sacred space—an educational space. We listen intently to those who sit around it, we ask questions, test theories, discover whether or not we will ever again eat peas. We learn what authentic means without ever having to mention the word.

Words are important at the kitchen table as our language is inexorably linked to our identity. The language we use at our kitchen tables are our most authentic voices. These voices vary in tone and cadence, they vary in vernacular and dialect. As much work as our kitchen-table language does to tell us who we are, it also tells society who we are, and in turn how to sort us. Kitchen-table talk brings us together, eliciting the shared human experience of a moment of bliss or discovery, found in intimate mumblings in a familiar space. We have all had these moments. But kitchen-table talk can also divide us, as society continues to perpetuate the myth that some languages are better, smarter, or more correct, than others. Language is deeply personal; it is also highly political. Because of these two facts it is extremely important that educators help students understand how to become agents of language. By empowering students’ kitchen-table language in the classroom, teachers aid the fight for sociolinguistic justice in the broader community.

Sociolinguistic justice is defined as “self-determination for linguistically subordinated individuals and groups in sociopolitical struggles over language” (Bucholtz et al. 145).

Sociolinguistic justice is separate and distinct from *language rights* as the latter seeks definition

and approval through governmental policy, and the former is rooted in grassroots practice (Bucholtz et al. 146)—such as authentic language use and advocacy by students and teachers. Further, it is important for me to provide clarity in the definition of the term *kitchen-table language* due to the potential socioeconomic connotations the phrase may provoke, as it is ultimately my goal to promote inclusiveness. The *kitchen-table* is a concept, a metaphor for any intimate space where one participates in authentic communication with others. While the literal edifice of a kitchen-table is one possible meeting-ground for this type of communication it is by no means the singular space. As the nuclear family and gender roles are progressively redefined from their antiquated pasts, families not only look different, but so too do their familial gatherings and forms of communication. While I will not attempt to provide a description of these new familial styles or spaces, I will attempt to make clear the kitchen-table metaphor by reiterating that the kitchen-table is any intimate and authentic space with which we regularly engage, where our identities develop through communication among our most intimate relations be they parents, siblings, grandparents, and/or chosen family or friends. As humans our lives exist in communication, and it is often in the most familiar and familial places that our truest voices are released.

A push for educators to create space for students' kitchen-table language in the classroom is a perspective that values the humanity of each student and embraces their unique culture—a shove towards fostering authentic student engagement in school. This engagement has the opportunity to enable teachers to see the “vast...and often invisible repertoire of resources that youth bring to school” (Schultz and Hull 241). In a society that hierarchizes language, with Standard American English (SAE) and Academic English (AE) at the top, and all other languages and dialects below, it can be difficult for minority students whose kitchen-table

languages do not mirror SAE to feel integral to the English Language Arts (ELA) classroom. The name of the dialect alone—*Standard American English*—creates a problem as it then positions all non-SAE dialects as substandard, posing the question: whose standard? With the proportion of English Language Learners (ELL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) students in public schools growing, in California particularly, it is of pivotal importance to reassess the cultural hierarchy of language that has been established. Though “Latina/o youth currently constitute the largest group of minority students in U.S. schools” (Jiménez 972), there has been limited change in what ways and for what purposes English is taught. Because the teaching of English is a “social activity” it is “governed by social rules and social facts” (Andrews 55), explicit English instruction in ELA classrooms has evolved little due to a lack of progressive views regarding SAE as the epitomized dialect in the US. This issue is further complicated as the *standard in Standard American English* is an elusive quality. While social standards (including within schools) in the US are largely based on white Anglo or Euro-American *ideals*, language use and distinct dialectal variations are present and common among this base. There is no singular or standard SAE dialect. SAE is therefore an “idealized concept...a consolidation, a composite, of different dialects” (Andrews 207). While it is disturbing that SAE continues to be the sole model for English language use in ELA classrooms, recognizing that SAE is not a “fixed linguistic code” (Andrews 207) is the first step in promoting linguistic diversity and the inclusion of kitchen-table dialects at the desk.

Definitions of the successful ELA student have centered around student mastery of SAE and AE. The exclusive focus on SAE and AE acquisition is problematic as it rules out all other language competencies that students carry with them promoting an assimilationist view that further makes schools function as places of cultural reproduction instead of institutions fostering

authentic intrigue. Despite California's public schools serve "more linguistically marginalized youth than any other state" (Bucholtz et al. 145), and that Latino/a youth make up the largest group of minority students in public schools, these students continue to "demonstrate depressed levels of literacy development" (Jiménez 972) compared to their mainstream peers. Studies have shown, however, that this is not due to a lack of linguistic ability, but to the lack of inclusion in public school curriculum as "language minority students will succeed or fail to the extent that their language and culture are incorporated into the school program" (Jiménez 973). Teachers who hold narrowly defined views of linguistic success push non-SAE speaking students towards assimilation—as one's cultural identity is "affirmed or negated during literacy events (Jiménez 975)—instead of cherishing the unique learning opportunities present in a linguistically diverse environment.

Perpetuated beliefs surrounding what language skills are necessary and ideal in order to be successful in the US have led many teachers, parents, and students, to believe in bilingualism as a deficit. The belief that one's kitchen-table language can "interfere" with the development and acquisition of SAE and AE is antiquated at best. The value of students' linguistic resources are immense as they not only help condition a student's identity, but also aid the development of intellectual power overall. Research has indicated that the support of "native-language literacy results in increased academic performance" (Brown and Souto-Manning 37) in both English and the native language. Despite this however, non-SAE language skills have largely been approached and treated as a deficit with curriculum aiming to remove the kitchen-table language—sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously—before enabling students to access higher competency material.

While ESL and ELL programs historically have aimed to provide support for students in developing greater English language proficiency, without the intent to remove one's native language, they have morphed into labels signifying remedial student status. ESL status has become a weighted descriptor, now an "institutional marker" for someone who is a "novice in the English language" (Ortmeier-Hooper 390). Moreover, the status of limited SAE exposure, such as being ESL or ELL, has developed the connotation of limited knowledge or capability to learn in general. While many movements have attempted to address the needs of minority students, many have only been successful in ostracizing students further as these movements have only provided aid for the students in question to assimilate into mainstream culture and its language, and have not affected change to the system itself (Deschenes, Cuban, and Tyack 559).

Schools have continually tried to get non-mainstream students to fit into a one-size-fits-all educational model, but with limited success. While ELL and ESL programs aim to provide support for the students that qualify as being either ESL or ELL, these programs do little to change the fundamental issue at hand; that it is schools systemically that need to change the way ELA is taught to engage a broader more multicultural student population instead of developing band-aids for non-mainstream student "issues" that further subjugate. Our traditional system has labeled non-mainstream students and has cast them aside. Instead of focusing on individual student "deficits," educators and reformers should focus on the deficits of the system that are failing student needs. While the focus of this paper is not to specifically address all of the systemic deficits public school students and educators face, the approach to incorporate authentic engagement through the integration of kitchen-table language is one possible starting point for reassessing how and why ELA is taught, as literacy can and should be considered "a necessary starting point for the transformation of society" (Jiménez 975). Further, instead of focusing

concern on SAE and AE acquisition, educators should think deeply about the “class-based nature...and methods schools have used” (Deschenes, Cuban, and Tyack 527) to categorize children. When schools, and teachers, adopt a deficit discourse, that non-mainstream students are in some way lacking, they poise students to adopt an “oppositional stance toward schooling” (Brown and Souto-Manning 27). With general resistance to school already present among teenagers, it is up to teachers and schools to incorporate an identity focused pedagogy for all students, and particularly for non-mainstream students such as ELL and ESL students.

A focus on incorporating all students’ kitchen-table language into everyday curriculum will help students feel included in the classroom, and promote a sense of relevance in the content material. All students, but particularly ESL and ELLs often feel conflicted in struggling to identify themselves between a “classroom, home, and social identity” (Ortmeier-Hooper 392). The sense that we have different faces in different places is accurate for most humans, but teenagers in particular, as their lives are governed by distinct sets of social interactions. The social focus of teenage life exists outside and in school settings. Bridging the gap between these social identities is key for fostering authentic engagement. It is essential for teachers to first recognize that identity is always intersectional, and then educate their students to that truth so they may become agents of their identity—meaning agents of their language, culture, values, interests, and beliefs.

The first step in helping students achieve agency is to examine the educator’s role in addressing the race, class, gender, and linguistic inequities in public education. It is essential for teachers to operate consciously of these inequities, but also for them to “teach students to question the basic assumptions of our society that legitimate inequality” (Christensen 105). By teaching students about the social systems that are in flux, students and educators can begin to

find ways to work together to dismantle said systems, which historically have favored a single student type. Placing value on what each individual students brings with them to the classroom, and positioning the classroom as a learning community, promotes self-efficacy, that is “the belief and confidence that students have about their capacity to accomplish meaningful tasks” (Brozo and Flynt 172). Building self-efficacy relies on teachers to generate interest and engagement. One potential way to do this is to create space for students’ kitchen-table language in the ELA classroom. Because “cognitive development is socially mediated” (Jordan, Jensen, and Greenleaf 16) teachers that enable students to embrace their outside interests and identities create collaborative, peer-driven academic inquiry.

After both teachers, and students develop awareness surrounding the issue of sociolinguistic justice, together they then can set out to further explore how to, and the purpose of developing and nurturing individual identity in the classroom. Each culture develops its own “schema and script” for its members to express knowledge (Brown and Souto-Manning 28), awareness of this enables teachers to recognize the value and intelligence of students’ kitchen-table literacies, and aids students in developing their identity and agency. As awareness of intersectionality grows, for both teachers and students, ELA curriculum needs to become more permeable. Though often developed with the best intentions to value diversity and be inclusionary, the traditional ELA classroom can push non-mainstream students to “define themselves in a singular way, cast in a role they do not want to play, and forced to choose one identity over another” (Ortmeier-Hooper 409), such as an ELL, or ESL identity. Further, it can push students to drop either label and aim for assimilation, and thus, erosion of a culturally specific identity.

When teachers create space for and promote the use of kitchen-table language in the classroom, they are not only placing value on the out of school knowledge youth bring with them, they are encouraging the development of the whole human. Because language is so intimately connected to identity, the ELA classroom needs to lead the way in establishing cultural relevance in public schools for all students, but for traditionally marginalized students in particular. Learning should be holistic. Students should not solely learn strategies to access academic texts, but also tactics to develop a clear, individual voice. Educators should reorient their definition of what makes a student knowledgeable as “lasting learning is most readily fostered when academic experiences build on...the linguistic and cultural knowledge they [students] bring from home” (Bucholtz et al. 145). While the idea of agency, sociolinguists, and intersectionality may not be immediately familiar to the average high school student, these are all concepts immediately relevant to their daily lives. Students should not have to wait until college to be able to explore and be empowered by their kitchen-table language and culture. Early affirmation of their unique linguistic abilities may even push them to pursue a college education (Bucholtz et al. 146). Encouraging students to make connections between their kitchen-table identities and academic identities diversifies the classroom and fosters authenticity. When students feel their voice, culture, and interests are valued in the classroom first, the push to engage academic tasks becomes easier later on.

All students have complex literary histories. Language is more than a tool or skill, it “reflect[s] and even define[s] our social worlds” (Katz, Graff, and Brynson 2). An educational approach that cherishes language for the complex and integral identifying element that it is better serves the diverse makeup of public school classrooms in California. Extending the kitchen-table to the classroom desk integrates home and community, implicitly and explicitly placing value on

the culture and knowledge students carry with them to school. Active engagement with students' kitchen-table language aids the removal of deficit thinking from teachers and students alike. Acknowledgement that linguistic homogeneity is a myth (Ortmeier-Hooper 413), and that SAE is in fact not *standard* but an *idealized* dialect further promotes an additive educational attitude. It is not enough for educators to simply be aware of the inequities many students face in public schools. Educators must begin to honestly examine, the root of assimilationist attitudes and problematize them. Students too must be included in this reflection and taught not only to value their own kitchen-table language, but how to become their own sociolinguistic agents in the world. The inexorable connection between language and identity can and should be explored in K-12 schools. English Language Arts classrooms in particular are ripe with opportunity to lead the way in helping to redefine what it means to be a successful student and language user in the United States. Perhaps the world does begin at a kitchen table, and perhaps it is explored, understood, and transformed at a desk.

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Katz, Mira-Lisa, Nelson Graff, and Nancy Brynelson. "Theoretical Foundations: for Reading and Writing Rhetorically." ERWC Task Force (California State University, Task Force on Expository Reading and Writing). *Expository Reading and Writing Course*. 2nd ed. Long Beach: California State University, 2013.

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Annotated Bibliography

Andrews, Larry. *Language Exploration and Awareness: A Resource Book for Teachers*. Mahwah, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1998. Print.

In *Language Exploration and Awareness*, Larry Andrews unapologetically states his case for integrated language instructions in K-12 classrooms. Andrews argues that “teaching the English language [is] a social activity governed by social rules and social facts” (Andrews 55), and that to reduce language to a simple set of grammatical rules out of context defies the inherent purpose of language. His focus on studying language in “authentic social circumstances” (Andrews 54) is intriguing to my research interests as I examine ways to mix up language registers between the kitchen table and the desk. It is suggested that English teachers move away from the stereotype of being in charge of repairing “other people’s language faults” (Andrews 60) and embrace all aspects of the English Language Arts classroom. Chapter eight, “Regional, Social, and Historical Variations,” is particularly helpful in explicating the difference between idiolect, dialect, and vernacular. Because my research focuses on defining “kitchen table” as a dialect of American English, it is important to understand the definition, and flexibility (or non-) of these terms. Andrews claims that “*Standard American English* (SAE) is an idealized concept...a consolidation, a composite, of different dialects...SAE is not a unitary or a single or a fixed linguistic code” (Andrews 207). Moreover, Andrews examines language as a place where linguistic discrimination lives and that “negative attitudes toward language differences...are not a new trend” (Andrews 211). A focus on “effective communication” over “proper communication” is prolonged.

Applebee, Arthur N, Judith A Langer, Martin Nystrand, and Adam Gamoran. "Discussion-Based Approaches to Developing Understanding: Classroom Instruction and Student Performance in Middle and High School English." *American Educational Research Journal*, 40.3 (2003): 685-730.

An objective research study composed of over six-dozen ELA classrooms examining the relationship between “student literacy performance and discussion-based approaches” for comprehension and understanding. Results indicated that the discussion-based model improved student knowledge and skill set in engaging with challenging literacy tasks and texts. Applebee et al. focus on the social aspect of the classroom indicating that learning and cognition takes place in dialogue. Further, they examine previous studies that suggests the depositing, traditional education model, fails non-mainstream student populations: “Non-mainstream students—low achievers, children of the poor, and second-language learners—fare poorly in classrooms with traditional instructional approaches, which are structured in ways that fail to capitalize on these students’ strengths and instead magnify their weakness” (Applebee et al. 689). The study outlines research and methods thoroughly. Applebee’s et al. findings align with my research interests and have answered questions regarding the role and purpose of authentic communication in educational spaces. In the conclusion of their findings, Applebee et al. states,

“Classrooms are complex places in which instruction always involves an ongoing negotiation of roles and relationships among teachers, students, and subject matter” (Applebee et al. 722).

Brown, Sally, and Mariana Souto-Manning. "'Culture is the Way They Live Here': Young Latin@s and Parents Navigate Linguistic and Cultural Borderlands in U.S. Schools." *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 7.1 (2007): 25-42.

This case study follows a single Puerto Rican immigrant family moving to the southern United States. With the family’s two young children enrolled in English-only public schools, Brown and Souto-Manning examine the ways in which traditional schools perpetuate the myth of “bilingualism as a deficit” (Brown and Souto-Manning 25). They suggest a sociocultural perspective that values the humanity of each student and embraces their unique culture. Brown and Souto-Manning suggest supporting the maintenance of multiple cultures is what will make bilingual, bicultural students the most successful in life—which trumps success in school alone. The authors suggest that bilingualism has largely been seen as a deficit due to the antiquated belief that one’s home language will “interfere” with the development and acquisition of Standard and Academic English. Further, they examine how immigrants as well as schools adopt these assimilationist views.

Brozo, William G, and E. Sutton Flynt. "Motivating Students to Read in the Content Classroom: Six Evidence-Based Principles." *Reading Teacher*, 62.2 (2008): 172-174.

Brozo and Flynt provide six evidenced-based principles for engaging students in the K-12 classroom in reading. The importance of reading is two-fold: first, children who become engaged in reading at a young age have a “greater chance of becoming life-long readers” (Brozo and Flynt 172); and children who do not read run the risk of “never acquiring critical background knowledge” (Brozo and Flynt 172). The interested student is the engaged student, and so to help all students the authors lay out six principles for classroom literacy. Brozo and Flynt begin by defining “self-efficacy,” which is “the belief and confidence that students have about their capacity to accomplish meaningful tasks” (Brozo and Flynt 172). They move on to explain that the best way to build self-efficacy is to generate interest and engagement. Next, they stress the importance of engaging students’ outside interests, as they can bridge the gap between school based texts. Fourth, easy access to an abundance of interesting materials is necessary to foster student engagement. Fifth, Brozo and Flynt stress the importance of expanding choice in the classroom, allowing students to self-select reading material. Lastly, they discuss the necessity of structuring collaboration between students with the teacher making the effort to understand students’ social motivations. This article is of particular help to my research interests as I am curious as to how to bridge students’ in-school and out-of-school interests and identities.

Bucholtz, Mary, Audrey Lopez, Allina Mojarro, Elena Skapoulli, Chris VanderStouwe, and Shawn Warner-Garcia. "Sociolinguistic Justice in the Schools: Student Researchers as Linguistic Experts." *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 8.4 (2014): 144-157.

These authors explain the commitment of sociocultural linguistics to the cause of social justice challenging inequities on the basis of language in society, and specifically K-12 education. Bucholtz et al. explain the SKILLS (School Kids Investigating Language in Life and Society)

program and presents it as a case study providing educators with ways to give agency to their students' linguistic abilities. Further, Bucholtz et al. define *sociolinguistic justice* as "self-determination for linguistically subordinated individuals and groups in sociopolitical struggles over language" (145). This definition is given and determined separate from, and in contrast with *linguistic rights*. A focus on building knowledge through students' existing "funds of knowledge" (Buscholtz et al. 145), ties directly to my research interests and educational approach in aiming to create space for students' diverse literacies. Buscholtz et al. lay out SKILLS five main goals: linguistic valorization; linguistic legitimation; linguistic inheritance; linguistic access; and linguistic expertise. Each goal is explained and then a case study of SKILLS in practice at a Santa Barbara high school is presented with adequate representation of each goal being achieved throughout participation in the program. A "shared history" approach is taken to make the SKILLS program as inclusionary as possible, including asking Anglo- or European-American students to access their familial linguistics histories as most linguistic varieties have been scrutinized at some point in the US's national past. Buscholtz et al. focus on inclusionary language practices in K-12 classrooms will be of explicit importance in my research.

Christensen, Linda. *Reading, Writing, and Rising Up: Teaching about Social Justice and the Power of the Written Word*. Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools, 2000. Print.

Christensen's text examines the relationship between teachers and students and the educator's role in addressing the race, class, and gender inequities in the United States' public education system. It is essential "to teach students to question the basic assumptions of our society that legitimate inequality" (Christensen 105). By teaching students about the social systems that are in flux, students and educators, can begin to find ways to work together to dismantle said systems which historically favor a single type of person. A lack of reading, and writing against the grain allows "readers to silently accept these practices as just" (Christensen 105). *Reading, Writing, and Rising Up* is formatted as part lesson plan, part educational theory, and part confession of a long time educator working to facilitate real systemic change in the classroom. Of particular interest to my research is the chapter "Untracking English: Creating Quality Education For All Students." This chapter examines what the traditional "track" system in public education does for students who are not placed on higher tracks. Christensen explains the tracking system as a tool that legitimizes "social hierarchy" based on "perceived differences" (Christensen 170). Christensen examines white privilege in schools and the way in which tracking perpetuates myths about "academic ability that tracking imparts" (Christensen 170). Christensen states, "Students in advanced classes come to believe they "earned" a privilege that is often given [to] them based on race, class, or gender, while students in remedial classes come to feel they are incapable of completing more difficult work" (171). As my research interests focus on how to create space in the classroom for those who are typically taught to change—assimilate into a societally dictated mold—Christensen's writing is particularly valuable as she is someone who is actively working with students to create that space and equality. Further, Christensen's focus on the creative voice, and the honor she bestows upon students' kitchen table language, is inspiring.

Deschenes, Sarah, Larry Cuban, and David Tyack. "Mismatch: Historical Perspectives on Schools and Students Who Don't Fit Them." *Teachers College Record*, 103.4 (2001): 525.

This article examines what historically has happened to students who do not fit in the mainstream definition of success. Tracing student experience in public schools starting all the way back to the Victorian period, Deschenes, Cuban, and Tyack provide evidence for how non-mainstream students have been labeled and cast aside. Instead of focusing on individual student deficits, they suggest educators and reformers focus on the deficits of the system that is failing our children. While many movements have attempted to address the needs of minority students they have only been successful in ostracizing students further as these movements have only provided aid for students in question to assimilate into mainstream culture and have not affected change to the system itself. Deschenes, Cuban, and Tyack are concerned with the "class-based nature...and methods schools have used" (527) to categorize children. They provide several examples as to how the Victorian thought of "low achievement" was believed to be a result of a child whom was "deficient in character" (Deschenes, Cuban, and Tyack 529) has been perpetuated and renamed throughout the decades. While their research is relevant to my interests I disagree with their claim that vocational programs are designed to be solutions to teach different students (i.e. students not successful in the mainstream) who do not "have smarts and the pedagogical answer" but places to teach these students "different things in a different way in a different place" (Deschenes, Cuban, and Tyack 552). While this claim is presented negatively I do not think it should be.

Jiménez, Robert T. "Literacy and the Identity Development of Latina/o Students." *American Educational Research Journal*, 37.4 (2000): 971-1000.

Jiménez explores the interaction between literacy and identity that many Latina/o students face. His goal in this study was to understand how literacy in Spanish and English shaped the lives of students in K-12 education and their interpersonal connections with family and friends. Though "Latina/o youth currently constitute the largest group of minority students in U.S. schools" (Jiménez 972), a predominately Anglo-American, undertrained, teacher workforce has been left puzzled as to how to bridge these students unique literacy skills. This population of teachers, largely untrained in how to promote literacy in bilingual students, has continued to cause said students "to demonstrate depressed levels of literacy development in comparison to students from mainstream backgrounds" (Jiménez 972). Because past studies have thus far proved that "language minority students will succeed or fail to the extent that their language and culture are incorporated into the school program" (Jiménez 973), Jiménez seeks to explicate how teachers can do a better job at reaching minority students. An explanation of the power of voice, and identity, for all humans frames Jiménez's research questions and purposes. Ultimately, Jiménez urges educators and researchers to pay closer attention to these types of "cultural borderlands" (Jiménez 985), liminal places that are often deemed the exception, when most often they are more accurately the rule.

Jordan, Marean, Rita Jensen, and Cynthia Greenleaf. "'Amidst Familial Gatherings': Reading Apprenticeship in a Middle School Classroom." *Voices from the Middle*, 8.4 (2001): 15.

This piece focuses on a seventh grade classroom in San Leandro, California. The classroom teacher Rita uses a “Reading Apprenticeship” (Jordan, Jensen, and Greenleaf 15) approach to help develop her students reading and writing skills. A Reading Apprenticeship classroom is “an environment where [the teacher] and her students are engaged in a shared inquiry into reading, language, and literacy—what literacy is” (Jordan, Jensen, and Greenleaf 15). This approach asks teachers to focus on the multitude of literacy resources students have access to in order to contribute to a dynamic classroom environment. In Rita’s class, students develop their “reader’s tool kits” mental “tools such as questioning, predicting, summarizing, making connections, and re-reading” (Jordan, Jensen, and Greenleaf 15). A belief that “cognitive development is “socially mediated”” (Jordan, Jensen, and Greenleaf 16) leads teachers to embrace students’ outside interests as self and peer interests will then aid in driving academic inquiry. “*How and why we read in the ways we do become part of the curriculum accompanying a focus on what we read*” Jordan, Jensen and Greenleaf say (16). A shift away from the traditional classroom model that focused first on the *what* engages students earlier in their academic careers. By allowing students to engage literacy on a familiar level first—allowing them to bring in articles, comic books, video game manuals, etc.—teaches students that they do have critical reading skills inspiring them to tackle more challenging texts. Rita gives her students “opportunities to activate their prior knowledge, bringing both home and youth culture into their reading” (Jordan, Jensen, and Greenleaf 20). It is the teacher’s job to provide scaffolding, model good literacy skills, and anticipate where “meaning may breakdown” (Jordan, Jensen, and Greenleaf 21). Classrooms should be a “familial” place where students work together to develop their reading tool kits, how to disagree respectfully, and their identities: “Amidst this familial gathering, in this safe place where insights and confusions are equally valued, students are energetically practicing their craft” (Jordan, Jensen, and Greenleaf 23).

Katz, Mira-Lisa, Nelson Graff, and Nancy Brynelson. “Theoretical Foundations: for Reading and Writing Rhetorically.” ERWC Task Force (California State University, Task Force on Expository Reading and Writing). *Expository Reading and Writing Course*. 2nd ed. Long Beach: California State University, 2013.

This excerpt is from a larger work by the Expository Reading and Writing Course (ERWC) handbook. Katz, Graff, and Brynelson examine the best way to engage students in developing their literacy skills in an increasingly demanding society. They argue that beyond the ability to comprehend students must now also have the “critical skills to evaluate, synthesize, and produce new and complex” writings (Katz, Graff, and Brynelson 1). A focus on student engagement enables the ERWC to respond to these challenges. By addressing the broad spectrum of literacies students will engage in beyond high school, the ERWC prepares students for the “myriad of literacies they will encounter in diverse professional and community contexts” (Katz, Graff, and Brynelson 1). A belief that *what* we read is perhaps not as important as *how* and *why* we read guides teachers to engage students through accessible literature. A focus on “content, process, and purpose” (Katz, Graff, and Brynelson 2) as well as Aristotle’s rhetorical appeals, ethos, logos, and pathos, guides student comprehension of familiar, and challenging texts. The ERWC model is meant to foster “authentic discussions” (Katz, Graff, and Brynelson 3), in which the students feel valued a reaffirmed in their contribution to the classroom. Of supreme interest to my research is the section titled, “Developing a Literate Identity: Bridging In-School and Out-of-School Literacies. Bridging the gap between what students know, and experience outside and

inside school helps students to become conscious of “their own knowledge and expertise” (Katz, Graff, and Brynson 6), cultivating self-esteem and confidence with literacy. Further, when students are able to make connections and begin to feel as if school is relevant to their personal lives they are more willing to engage more challenging academic texts. The ERWC model aims to create connections between what students already know in order to develop new literacies skills they will need to be successful in college and career.

King, Elena Tosky, and Lokia M Scott. "English as Gatekeeper: Linguistic Capital and American Schools." *Journal for Multicultural Education*, 8.4 (2014): 226.

This article aims to progress language rights in K-12 classrooms through an examination of the preferred use of Standard American English using a cultural reproduction theory lens. While language has the opportunity to build bridges between students and teachers, it is often used instead to stratify those speaking other, non-SAE dialects. Further, King, Tosky, and Scott challenge the term *Standard American English* as it inherently places all other language and dialect use as substandard. A call for educators to “reexamine their individual perceptions about language differences” (226) drives the essay. While classrooms have increasingly diversified schools have remained static in their standards and approaches.

Ortmeier-Hooper, Christina. "English May Be My Second Language, but I'm Not 'ESL'." *College Composition and Communication*, 59.3 (2008): 389-419.

Ortmeier-Hooper follows three self-identified ESL (English as a Second Language) students through a first semester college composition course. She challenges the terms ESL, ELL, and Generation 1.5 claiming terms such as these can be alienating towards minority students. While the terms are intended to cherish the diversity these students bring to classrooms, Ortmeier-Hooper’s research shows students often feel the labels award negative stereotypes to their academic abilities. Throughout the article identity is explored and defined in terms of how it is revealed in individual composition. Robert Brooke is cited as defining identity in two ways: “the identity that is assigned to us by our environment and our social interaction and the identity that we assign ourselves” (Ortmeier-Hooper qt. Brooke 391). The article explains that ESL students often feel conflicted in struggling to identify themselves between “a classroom, home, and social identity” (Ortmeier-Hooper 392). The notion of “ambivalent identities” is discussed as Ortmeier-Hooper seeks to understand how labels like ESL push students towards assimilation or confrontation with the dominant culture in the American classroom. “Fears of being ‘outed’ as an immigrant” (Ortmeier-Hooper 408) often plagues ESL students who would rather face assimilation than ostracization in school. Of particular relevance to my research interests is the author’s own discovery in what it means to work with ESL students. She states, “although we often have the best intentions to be inclusive and to value diversity, sometimes students feel pushed to define themselves in a singular way, cast in a role they do not want to play, and forced to choose one identity over another” (Ortmeier-Hooper 409). Ortmeier-Hooper’s examination of identity—how it is created, defined, and perpetually reproduced—is my focus for my lesson plan.

Ramsdell, Lea. "Language and Identity Politics: The Linguistic Autobiographies of Latinos in the United States." *Journal of Modern Literature*, 28.1 (2005): 166-176.

In an examination of three very different approaches to language-based autobiographies, Ramsdell explores the various attitudes connected to certain language usage. This literary analysis is framed with the statement, "Language is identity and identity is political" (Ramsdell 166). When bilingual or multilingual autobiographical writers make a choice to write in a particular language they are making a statement, positioning themselves, and their stories, politically in relation to power. Ramsdell's exploration of autobiographical writing finds that often bilingual writers are found often in an attempt to "reconcile their two languages into a coherent identity" (Ramsdell 167). This notion is of particular interest to me as I work towards understanding how to create space in K-12 classrooms for students to explore their languages, cultures, and identities. Ramsdell's pointing to identity and consciousness scholarship provides interesting insight to the ways in which language defines our consciousness.

Schultz, Katherine, and Glynda Hull. "Literacies in and out of School in the United States." *Encyclopedia of Language and Education*. 2nd ed. Vol. 2. New York, NY: Springer, 2008. 239-49. Print.

Schultz and Hull examine the ways literacy research has been divided. They claim that literacy research has been primarily divided into "school-based" and "out-of-school" research camps. This division has led to "narrowing conceptions of literacy" (Schultz and Hull 239) and growing disparities in teacher understanding on how to bridge the gap. Schultz and Hull cite several different studies throughout the decades examining ethnographic, sociolinguistic, linguistic, and anthropological approaches to literacy research. Examining students' home literacies has enabled teachers and researchers to "notice and account for the vast, diverse, and often invisible repertoire of resources that youth bring to school" (Schultz and Hull 241). They accept that learning is a collaborative process and theorize on the connections between literacy, culture, identity, and power. Further, Schultz and Hull examine the classroom as a "third space" for students as well as the influence technology has on bridging inner and outer school literacies. Schultz and Hull present that with the use of technology by youth today students are "never really either simply in school or out of school" (243) and call for curriculum to become more permeable. Though "out-of-school" literacy research has led to more student engagement in the classroom it has not, and does not, aid in fundamentally changing the school structure that perpetuates narrow curriculum. Schultz and Hull call on future researchers to present new theoretical perspectives to address the problem of schools as harbors of social reproduction.

Street, Brian. "Literacy in Theory and Practice: Challenges and Debates over 50 Years." *Theory into Practice*, 52 (2013): 52.

Street highlights the tension between theory and practice on the teaching of literacy over the past 50 years. He examines the question of whether the "teaching of reading should be an art or a science" (Street 52), a question that has been debated for decades. Though largely teaching reading has been approached as a science, this method has left researchers and teachers frustrated. Though research has repeatedly guided instructs to teach literacy in formulaic ways, teaching reading in practice is almost never done this way. Why does there continue to be a discrepancy between theory and practice? Largely, Street argues that comprehension is a "social activity" and that classrooms are "literate communities" (Street 54). Despite the ways in which

researchers believe reading should be taught, Street argues that the focus on accountability and testing does not adequately instruct or evaluate students. Street states, “The current educational climate emphasizes accountability and rigor much more than student engagement...this is not enough for students to become strategic and independent readers” (Street 57). Moreover, “for children to want to continue to learn to write, they have to learn that writing has meaning and use and that what is written is valued” (Street 59). Street’s instructional approach is of particular importance to my research interests as it focuses not only on how to engage students in the ELA classroom, but how that focus will aid in creating students engaged in life-long literacy practices.

Weaver, Constance. *Teaching Grammar in Context*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1996. Print.

The title of Weaver’s book could be no more appropriate to her message: good grammar instruction is concerned with “effectiveness” not “adherence to “rules”” (Weaver 14). As a functional linguist, Weaver’s focus is on how “language works to achieve various purposes” (Weaver 14). She examines the span of a student’s language acquisition, charting trends in linguistic development through collect student work. Weaver explicates key research on the effectiveness of explicit grammar instruction and argues that those who continue to advocate for explicit instruction in K-12 education do so without any evidential backing. Drawing on Chomsky’s theory of transformational-generative linguistics, which was interested in “native speakers’ language *competence*” (Weaver 30), Weaver breaks down both the “deep” and “surface” structures of grammar. While Weaver does not believe that explicit grammar instruction in one’s native tongue is necessary, she does state that, “focusing on certain aspects of grammar may have some place in the acquisition of an additional language” (Weaver 179). In an increasingly bilingual education system, where more and more students, in California particularly, are speaking English as second language, is it then necessary, and even important, for grammar instruction to continue in the K-12 classroom? Is there away to promote English grammar instruction while nurturing students’ kitchen table languages? Weaver discusses primarily how we acquire our “native language,” so further examination of how her theory applies to ELLs is needed at this time.

Kitchen-Table Talk: Creating Authentic Engagement in K-12 Classrooms

Instructional Unit Plan

Based on

School Kids Investigating Language in Life and Society (SKILLS)

“Sociolinguistic Justice in the Schools: Student Researchers as Linguistic Experts” by Bucholtz et. al

Section One—Linguistic Valorization/Linguistic Access

Quick-write: Survey of Linguistic Attitudes

(Adapted from Andrews 203)

1. When you hear someone pronounce a word differently than you do, how do you feel? What is your reaction?
2. Do you correct the pronunciation? Why, or why not?
3. Do you reassess your pronunciation? Why, or why not?
4. What opinions do you form about the person with the different pronunciation?
5. Where do you think these opinions and reactions come from?

Pairs share→Class discussion

Small Group Activity: Exploration of Common Words with Varying Pronunciation

(Adapted from Andrews 216)

Directions: In groups of 3-5 read through the list of words below with each person pronouncing the word before moving on to the next. If every member of the group pronounces the word the same place a (*) next to it. If pronunciation varies circle the word.

- | | | | |
|-------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| 1. Pecan | 2. Tomato | 3. Almond | 4. Salmon |
| 5. Aunt | 6. Pajamas | 7. Herbal | 8. Chile |
| 9. Marinara | 10. Water | 11. Llama | 12. Greasy |

Please respond to the following questions:

- What words varied in pronunciation among group members?
- Did the change in pronunciation change the meaning of the word?
- Did anyone defend his/her pronunciation over another? Why?
- What reasoning was given for a varying pronunciation, if any?
- Did differing pronunciation interfere with communication?

Class Discussion of Findings

Language Survey

Directions: Read each statement carefully then please score each statement from 0-5.

5 if the statement is always or often true to you

3 if the statement is sometimes true to you

0 if the statement is rarely or never true to you

1. ___ The language I speak at home is the same language of instruction at my school.
2. ___ I can easily get around my town and school and follow instructions in class because directions are given in a language that I understand.
3. ___ I have never had to act as a translator for my parents.
4. ___ I can go to the store and easily find magazines in my native language.
5. ___ The school library has a broad array of texts written in my native language.
6. ___ Use of my native language is encouraged in my ELA classroom.
7. ___ I have never been told that I have an accent.
8. ___ If people ask me to repeat myself I can be sure it is not because of my accent.
9. ___ I have never been labeled as a English Language Learner (ELL), or a English as a Second Language (ESL) student.
10. ___ People do not make negative judgments about my intelligence or competence based on my reading and writing abilities.
11. ___ I have never been told that I am a slow reader.
12. ___ I feel confident speaking up in class.
13. ___ I have never had a teacher correct my pronunciation of a word.
14. ___ I have competency in one language and do not feel as though I must learn another.
15. ___ My friends and I use the same slang.
16. ___ I've never been told my English is "pretty good."
17. ___ My native language can be labeled as similar to the dialect *Standard American English*.
18. ___ I can acquire a driver's license because my native language enables me to pass the written test for a learner's permit.
19. ___ I do not feel the need to become an agent of sociolinguistic justice.
20. ___ My identity is not tied to my language use.

My Score ____/100

Scores of 80 and above signify a status of linguistic privilege.

Scores between 60-79 demonstrate moderate linguistic privilege.

Scores 59 and below signify limited or no linguistic privilege.

The language survey is a starting point for teachers and students to consider where they fall on the spectrum of linguistic privilege. In order to promote the inclusion of marginalized languages and dialects students should be aware of the linguistic benefits given to those in the United States whose kitchen-table languages reflect Standard American English (SAE).

Quote/Reflection

“Language doesn’t exist in a vacuum. It reflects all the life and variety and change and divisions which exist in society.” –David Crystal

1. What is your understanding/explanation of what this quote means?
2. Do you agree or disagree with Crystal about his statement? Why, or why not?

Pairs share → Class discussion

Definitions

Accent

Dialect

American English

Standard American English (SAE)

Academic English (AE)

Sociolinguistic Justice

Kitchen-Table Language

Accent “refers only to distinctive pronunciations” (Andrews 215)

Dialect “refers to any language variety in which the speakers use (a) similar pronunciations, (b) similar word choices, and (c) their sentences are *grammatically* different from other regional or social groups of speakers” (Andrews 215).

American English “The dominant language in the United States, comprised of different dialects...not a unitary, single set of established linguistic behaviors” (Andrews 206).

Standard American English (SAE) While social standards (including within schools) in the US are largely based on white Anglo or Euro-American *ideals*, language use and distinct dialectal variations are present and common among this base. There is no singular or standard SAE dialect. SAE is therefore an “idealized concept...a consolidation, a composite, of different dialects” (Andrews 207). SAE is not a “fixed linguistic code” (Andrews 207).

Academic English (AE) A dialect of English used in formal institutions, such as schools, and in scholarship. The most highly regarded form of the English Language.

Sociolinguistic Justice “Self-determination for linguistically subordinated individuals and groups in sociopolitical struggles over language” (Bucholtz et al. 145).

Kitchen-Table Language The *kitchen-table* is a concept, a metaphor for any intimate space where one participates in authentic communication with others. The kitchen-table is any intimate and authentic space, with which we regularly engage, where our identities develop through communication amongst our most intimate relations be they parents, siblings, grandparents, and/or chosen family or friends.

Quick-Write

Do you believe there is a language hierarchy in the United States? If so, what do you believe the ranking to be? Which languages and/or dialects are idealized, and why? What is your understanding of the term *Standard American English*? What is your experience/exposure with/to SAE? Who do you believe sets the “standard” referred to? Is there anything you see as problematic in relation to the term? Do you think ELA classrooms should engage your kitchen-table language?

Pairs share → Class discussion

Like, Totally Rad Homework: Examination of Slang

(Adapted from Andrews 237)

Directions: First, make a list of slang terms that you currently use. Second, list slang terms you’ve used in the past but no longer use. Third, interview your parents, grandparents, or other adults about the slang terms they used to use (ask them to identify the era/decade). Then answer the following questions:

1. Are there any terms that overlap? If so, which? List them.
2. What caused you to stop using some slang words?
3. What caused your parents to stop using some slang words? (Ask them.)
4. How/who decides which words are “in” and which ones are “out?”
5. How do you think slang words are created? Where/who is the source of new slang?

Review

1. What is the difference between *accent* and *dialect*?
2. What is *sociolinguistic justice*? Why is it important?
3. Should SAE remain the primary objective of the ELA classroom?
4. How are *culture* and *language* related?
5. What is *kitchen-table language* and how is it related to *identity*?

Section Two—Linguistic Legitimation

Reading Habits Survey: Part I

(Adapted from Katz and Akashian ERWC)

Directions: Rank each item on a scale of 0-5 to indicate how often you read each one.

0 = Never

3 = Sometimes/Occasionally

5 = Daily/Often

___ Blogs

___ Twitter

___ Internet News Sites

- ___ Cookbooks ___ Poetry ___ Comics/ Graphic Novels
- ___ Newspaper ___ Facebook ___ Magazines (Print)
- ___ Song Lyrics ___ Fiction ___ Short Stories
- ___ Non-fiction ___ Textbooks ___ Instruction Manuals

Please answer the following questions:

1. Based on your answers, which type of reading do you enjoy the most? Why?
2. Based on your answer, which types of reading do you enjoy the least? Why?
3. Which types of reading do you find most difficult?
4. When is the last time you read a book (print) from cover to cover?
5. What is the best book you have ever read? Why did you like it?

Reading Habits Survey: Part II

Directions: Read each statement carefully, and then indicate whether you **agree (+)** or **disagree (-)**.

1. ___ Reading is important.
2. ___ Reading is something you either do well or do not do well.
3. ___ Some people are naturally good at reading.
4. ___ You need to read well to be successful.
5. ___ *What* you read is more important than *how* or *why* you read.
6. ___ Reading is less important today than it was in the past.
7. ___ Books my teachers assign are not relevant to my life.
8. ___ Books/stories that incorporate my culture and background are more interesting to read.
9. ___ Reading can be fun.
10. ___ With effort, I can understand anything I try to read.

Pairs share → Class discussion

You're the Expert: Teach-a-Text

(Adapted from Katz and Akashian ERWC)

Directions:

1. Review Part I of the Reading Habits Survey.
2. List the types of reading materials you ranked with a 4 or 5.

3. Now select the text you feel most familiar with and answer the following questions:
- What is the text about? What is the text's intended purpose (persuade, entertain, inform, amuse, instruct)?
 - What characteristics/features are specific to this text? (Does it have headings? Pictures? Maps? Numbers? Charts? Specialized vocabulary?) List and describe its stylistic elements.
 - Who is this text written for? Who would want to read it and why?
 - Why did you pick this text/why do you like it?
 - Who is the author? Have you read other pieces from this author?
 - When was it written?
 - What are the main ideas/points/arguments?
 - What background knowledge do you need to know to understand this piece?
 - Why is this text important/relevant to your life?
4. Next you will use your notes to develop a mini-lesson on your selected text. On your assigned day you will bring your text to class to share. As the expert you will be in charge of guiding your group towards understanding and interpreting the piece you've chosen.
5. Complete the group checklist.

You're the Expert: Teach-a-Text Group Checklist

(Adapted from Katz and Akashian ERWC)

Observations About Text Structure

The text is organized...

The pattern of the text is...

The title and headings are...

Certain words are...

The vocabulary is...

Making Connections

This text reminds me of...

I can relate to...

There is a parallel to...

This makes me think about...

Questions

- What did this text teach you?
- What did you learn about this type of text?
- What did you learn about the student that selected it?
- Will you engage with similar materials in the future?
- What new terms/vocabulary did you learn?
- What were you confused by?
- What aspects were similar to the text you selected?

Review

1. List 5 different types of texts.
2. List 3 reading strategies.
3. Is *what* you read as important as *why* and *how* you read?

Section Three—Linguistic Inheritance

Quote/Reflection

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.”
—American folk proverb

1. What is your understanding/explanation of this quote?
2. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why, or why not?
3. What makes language powerful?

Pairs share→Class discussion

Thinking Critically

1. Is it better to be accommodated or accepted? Why? What’s the difference?
2. What does it mean to be a part of the dominant culture? Is it good or bad? What are the advantages/disadvantages?
3. What is assimilation? What causes people to assimilate?
4. What are stereotypes? Are they accurate or inaccurate?
5. What are the connotations of being an outsider? Are the connotations always negative? Is there ever a good time to be an outsider? Why or why not?

Pairs share→Class discussion

Examining Your Kitchen-Table Language

Directions: **First**, you will need to determine your *kitchen-table*.

*Remember the *kitchen-table* is a concept, a metaphor for any intimate space where one participates in authentic communication with others. The kitchen-table is any intimate and authentic space, with which we regularly engage, where our identities develop through communication amongst our most intimate relations be they parents, siblings, grandparents, and/or chosen family or friends. While the literal edifice of a kitchen-table is one possible meeting-ground for this type of communication it is by no means the singular space. Other places this kind of communication could take place include: your bedroom, living room, backyard, or car; the school cafeteria, quad, or hallway; or your workplace break-room.

Secondly, once you have determined your *kitchen-table* you will need to plan a time to record yourself in conversation with others in that space (either on your phone or with a small recorder). Please alert those you are in communication with that you will be recording them, but reassure them the recording will only be listened to by you, and encourage them to speak and act as normally as possible. Record 10-15 minutes of conversation.

Next, you will listen to the recording (as many times as you need) and create a word bank of words and phrases that stand out to you. Next, you will analyze your language use by answering the following questions:

1. What is your *kitchen-table*? (AKA where are you?)
2. What is the conversation primarily about?
3. What language is predominately spoken? What dialect?
4. Is more than one language used? If so, which ones?
 - a. List specific words spoken in the non-dominant language.
 - b. Why do you think these words are spoken in this language?
 - c. What might audience have to do with this selection?
 - d. What are the words implicit or explicit meanings?
5. What slang terms are used? List specific words/phrases.
 - a. Why is this slang used?
 - b. What might audience have to do with this selection?
 - c. What are the words implicit or explicit meanings?
6. What is the tone of the conversation?
7. What is the cadence of the conversation?
8. What is significant about the *way* you're conversing?

Lastly, you will bring your findings to class for discussion.

Engaging Your Kitchen-Table Language Through Poetry

Prewriting

Instructor will share both Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales’s “I Am Joaquín” as well as Joy Harjo’s “Perhaps the World Ends Here” with the class. Students will then break into groups and work on analyzing the poems collectively. The teacher will then facilitate a class discussion surrounding the group findings.

Quick-write

Were you able to identify with either poem, why, or why not? What do you understand to be the meaning of the poem? How do the authors’ language choices contribute to the meaning of the work as a whole? What is significant about the form/style of the poem? How does the form/style aid the creation of meaning? What dialect is the poem written in? What slang is used? Does the poem appear to come from a place of personal significance to the author?

Directions: Students will use either Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales’s poem “I Am Joaquín,” or Joy Harjo’s “Perhaps the World Ends Here” as inspiration and/or a model for an original piece of poetry. Using the word bank and language analysis from the previous activity should assist you in writing. The poem should reflect something you’ve learned about yourself and/or your linguistic heritage. Be strategic in your language choices—they should not only reveal something about yourself to the audience, but further the meaning of the poem as well. The poem can be written in any style—**250 words minimum**.

Review

1. What is *kitchen-table language*?
2. How are language and identity connected?
3. What is assimilation?
4. What is revealed through our language use?

Section Four—Linguistic Expertise

Linguistic Expertise: Research Project

Students will produce a multi-phase research project demonstrating their skills as agents of language.

Directions: Students will write a **researched essay** on the topic of sociolinguistics. This essay should include a well-formed arguable thesis relating to either a current or past linguistic issue in the United States. Students are encouraged to frame their research around a topic that is relevant/authentic to them. (*Remember, all language users inherently have linguistic expertise—this is an opportunity to explore yours.) This assignment is meant to serve the development of your linguistic identity and should include a self-reflective element/quality.

Students will develop a set of comprehensive research questions to drive their inquiry. Questions can include (but are not limited to):

What is sociolinguistic justice and what is its effect on my life?

How has linguistic discrimination changed/adapted over time?

Is linguistic discrimination common in my community? What is its effect?

What social, political, and/or economic, factors are related to language use in the US?

How is language related to identity, and why is it important?

After developing a set of research questions students will be expected to engage in both academic, and community based research. Students will be required to use a broad array of primary and secondary sources such as academic journals, historical research/texts, newspapers, poetry, etc. Further, you will be required to conduct a **minimum of 2 interviews** of people that can speak to the linguistic issue at the foundation of your research. These interviews should be typed and included with the final works cited (plan on recording and then transcribing). Final papers should be **5 pages** in length, include a properly formatted works cited list, and a minimum of 2 interview transcripts.

Final Reflection

What did you learn about the topic of sociolinguistic justice through your research? What understandings did you gain of linguistic discrimination in the US? What knowledge did you gain of your own linguistic history, and expertise? Were you surprised by anything you uncovered in your research? What did you learn about becoming an agent of language? What actions can you take to effect change in your community relating to sociolinguistic justice?

Works Cited

- Andrews, Larry. *Language Exploration and Awareness: A Resource Book for Teachers*. Mahwah, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1998. Print.
- Bucholtz, Mary, Audrey Lopez, Allina Mojarro, Elena Skapoulli, Chris VanderStouwe, and Shawn Warner-Garcia. "Sociolinguistic Justice in the Schools: Student Researchers as Linguistic Experts." *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 8.4 (2014): 144-157.
- Gonzales, Rodolfo "Corky." "I Am Joaquín." *The Norton Anthology of Latino Literature*. Ed. Ilan Stavans and Edna Acosta-Belén. New York: W.W. Norton, 2011. 788-99. Print.
- Harjo, Joy. "Perhaps the World Ends Here." *The Woman Who Fell From the Sky*. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. 1951. Print.
- Katz, Mira-Lisa, and Meline Akashian. "Bring a Text You Like to Class: Bridging Out-of-School and In-School Literacies." ERWC Task Force (California State University, Task Force on Expository Reading and Writing). *Expository Reading and Writing Course*. 2nd ed. Long Beach: California State University, 2013.

Final Synthesis

Throughout the semester I have worked diligently to further develop my understanding of the ways in which we, as individual humans, are privileged, and marginalized in our society. This understanding can only come from the acknowledgement that our identities are always intersectional. Working within the theme of race, class, gender, feminism, and social justice has enabled me to see the extreme complexities of social structures in the United States. The knowledge of how these systems developed however, has also aided my optimism, as an understanding of their creation means additionally, an understanding of how to possibly dismantle them, and rebuild a more just and equitable society.

I decided to focus on the topic of sociolinguistic justice because language is an essential component of humanity. The world exists in communication. Our stories, histories, and knowledge are passed through our language. Because of this, language is also highly political, and the marginalizing effects on those who speak non-*Standard American English* (SAE) dialects is an issue I have only through the course of my research come to fully understand. Linguistic privilege is often the last type of privilege to be challenged. I believe this is because beliefs surrounding what language should be spoken, where, and when, is a dialogue dominated by SAE, and Academic English (AE) speakers. Because the people who promote and hold SAE and AE as the *best* form of language speak and write in SAE and AE—our nations most socially accepted standard—they are given loudest voice in the room. The belief that all people—or as in the case of my research, all students—should aim to achieve fluency in SAE and AE in order to be deemed successful is a myth that only perpetuates linguistic intolerance. This is a myth that I

too believed in. As a future educator I believed it would be irresponsible to not prepare students to face the reality of linguistic discrimination that exists in our country. I thought teaching students *proper English* (SAE and AE) would be the best way to foster their success. I do not know why I believed this. I can only think it is because it is what I was told I should believe. As someone with linguistic privilege I have never had my language criticized, corrected, or questioned. I have never had to face losing my linguistic identity to find success. I will never have to worry about being forced to choose between *linguistic success* or communicating intimately with my parents, or grandparents in my native tongue.

Perhaps it is because I have always believed that language is personal, intimate, and powerful, that I decided to reevaluate my position on what constitutes successful language use in the classroom and beyond. All language users, even English only speakers, engage in dialectal and register shifts when communicating. As an avid reader, writer, and talker, I have noticed on an individual level, the many forms my language use takes based on audience and purpose. As I have developed a broader sense and understanding of rhetoric, my attitude has shifted away from *proper language* towards the right language for your particular purpose. When examining my own language use I noticed a distinct shift in how I talked when at my kitchen table surrounded by people I care deeply about. In that relaxed setting, and surrounded by people that challenge me, love me, and critique me constructively, I observed my language felt not only the most honest, but the most reflective of my true self—my kitchen-table self, the best version of me. I thought that if this was true for me, a native English speaker, this could perhaps happen, and with even greater impact, to those who speak a language other than English at home amongst their most intimate relations. It was this consciousness that lead me to explore sociolinguistics and define the term *kitchen-table language*—or *kitchen-table talk*.

In the course of my research I revisited several texts I had encountered previously—and with my previous attitudes—texts such as Larry Andrews’ *Language Exploration and Awareness*, Linda Christensen’s *Reading, Writing, and Rising Up*, as well as Constance Weaver’s *Teaching Grammar in Context*. Previously these were all works I doubted—searching for holes in their arguments to reaffirm my belief in SAE and AE. I revisited these works openly, playing the *believing game*, and let them teach me what I resisted but knew was right. There is no *proper English* or even a *Standard American English* dialect. There is only certain language for certain occasions. Primarily I have grown to understand throughout the course of this research, that it is not students that need to change their language use to fit a one-size-fits-all mold; it is the national attitude towards language that needs to adapt and grow with our increasingly diversifying population. It is *success* that needs to be questioned and redefined not students.

Language and identity are complexly intertwined. We are only what we can express to others and ourselves. That is why it is essential for educators, English Language Arts (ELA) educators in particular, to teach with an empathic consciousness of that linkage. Students are engaged in the classroom to the extent in which the material is relevant to their lives. It was my goal to explore sociolinguistic justice for the purpose of fostering authentic student engagement in my future classroom. Through my research I learned not only *why* it is essential to promote sociolinguistic justice, but also *how* to teach with a sociolinguistic justice framework. Further I was able to identify and create student access points on the topic in order for the next generation to be able to engage with the fight for linguistic equity in their classroom, and broader community.

The first step in this work was to simply reevaluate my attitude towards language use. By examining my personal privileges and biases I was able to dissect my beliefs surrounding SAE and question them thoughtfully. Once I begin to develop a fuller understanding of the connection between language and identity, I was able to reexamine arguments surrounding what *successful* language use means. Our language should nurture our souls, not perpetuate myths about *correctness*. All humans should have access to the right for our language to be a reflection of who we are, and not a reflection of the struggle of becoming who society tells us we should be.

Sit down at your kitchen-table; let's talk.

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EDUCATION

Bachelor of Arts in Human Communication

Expected May 2016

Concentration in English Subject Matter Preparation

California State University, Monterey Bay, Seaside, CA

- University GPA 4.0, Overall GPA 3.672, Dean's List 2014-present
- Teaching Assistant for *Literature into Film* Spring 2016: teaching practicum with focus on professional development, instructional strategy, and research methods
- Course work focused on diversity and multiculturalism: Cooperative Argumentation, Auto/Biographías, Multicultural Adolescent Literature, Creative Writing and Service Learning, Multicultural Conflict Resolution

Associate in Arts Degrees in English, Liberal Studies, and Liberal Arts and Sciences

May 2014

Emphasis in Interdisciplinary Studies

Cabrillo College, Aptos, CA

- Graduated with Honorable Mention, GPA 3.47
- Awarded *Teachers of Tomorrow* medal for showing outstanding potential as a future educator
- Participated in *Education 80* program focus on: educational theory, instructional strategy, and community service

VOLUNTEER WORK

Service Learner

January-May 2015

Rancho Cielo Youth Campus, Salinas, CA

Rancho Cielo is an alternative high school devoted to helping minority students achieve their high school diploma or GED. My work included crafting a semester long creative writing unit for mixed a grade-level Language Arts class. Unit focus: creative writing for social action, verse, culture and identity, and justice and equality for youth. (35 hours)

Instructional Aide

September-December 2013

Renaissance High School, La Selva, CA

Renaissance High School is a continuation high school focused on helping minority students achieve success. My role included tutoring, and co-teaching responsibilities in an English Language Development class of mixed grades. I developed lesson plans engaging students' language skills focused around food and cooking. (65 hours)

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

AVID Tutor/Instructional Aide/Proctor

August 2015-present

Watsonville High School, Watsonville, CA

- Facilitating student discovery and team work, assisting students in developing college readiness, serving as a university student mentor, proctoring SAT and ACT

Manager/Barista

June 2007-August 2012

Coffeetopia, Santa Cruz, CA

- Responsibilities included: organization of staff and finances, facilitating communication between staff and ownership, preparing food and beverages, assisting customers, maintaining quality of customer experience

Baker/Catering Assistant

May 2010-July 2011

Buns Bakery, Santa Cruz, CA

- Responsibilities included: baking various breads, rolls, pastries, and specialty items; planning, prep, and service at catering events; developing and facilitating monthly cooking courses for the public
- Featured in Santa Cruz *Good Times*