Embracing language differences and reducing bias and oppression in Writing

Dr. Odette Reid & Dr. Rhonda Reid University at Buffalo Center for Excellence in Writing

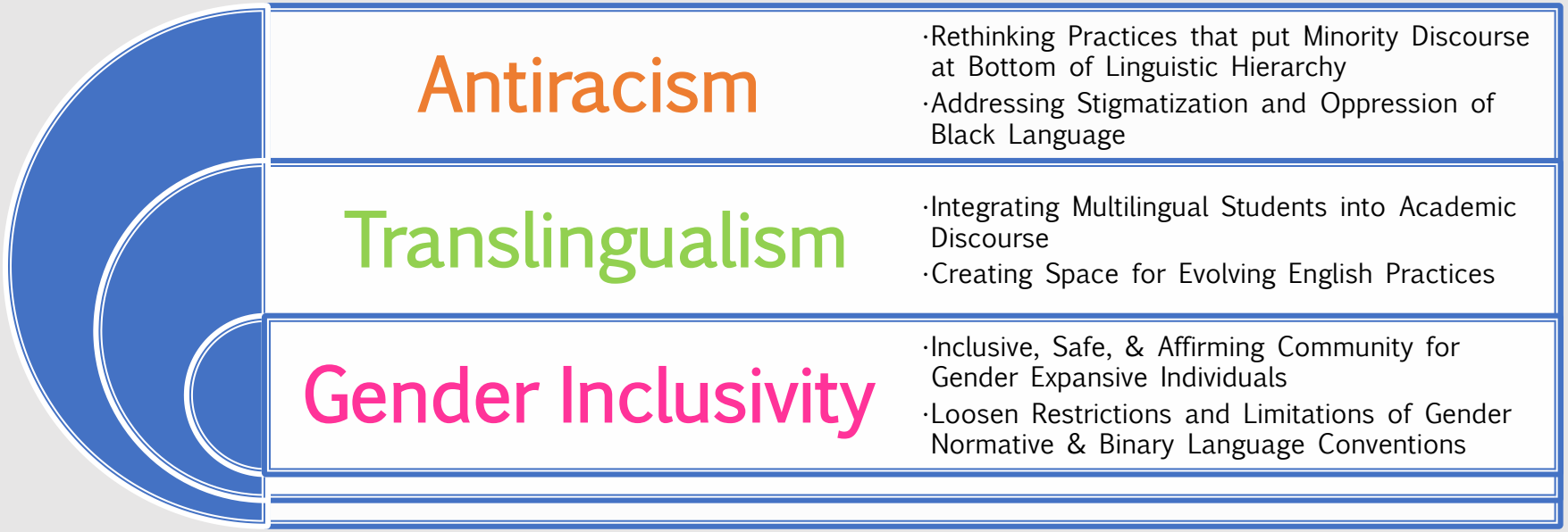
Presentation Overview

1. Introduction
   Icebreaker
   CEW Practices
2. Background: Language Oppression & Linguistic Racism
3. Linguistic Justice
4. Translingual Approach to Writing
5. Practices that Promote Linguistic Justice
6. Questions & Answers Discussion

Icebreaker - Unpacking Our Language and Writing Biases

- Have you been taught that there is “good” English and “bad” English?
- What assumptions do people make about how others speak or look?
- What types of biases do we have about the way other people might write or speak?

CEW'S PRACTICES: OUR 3 PILLARS



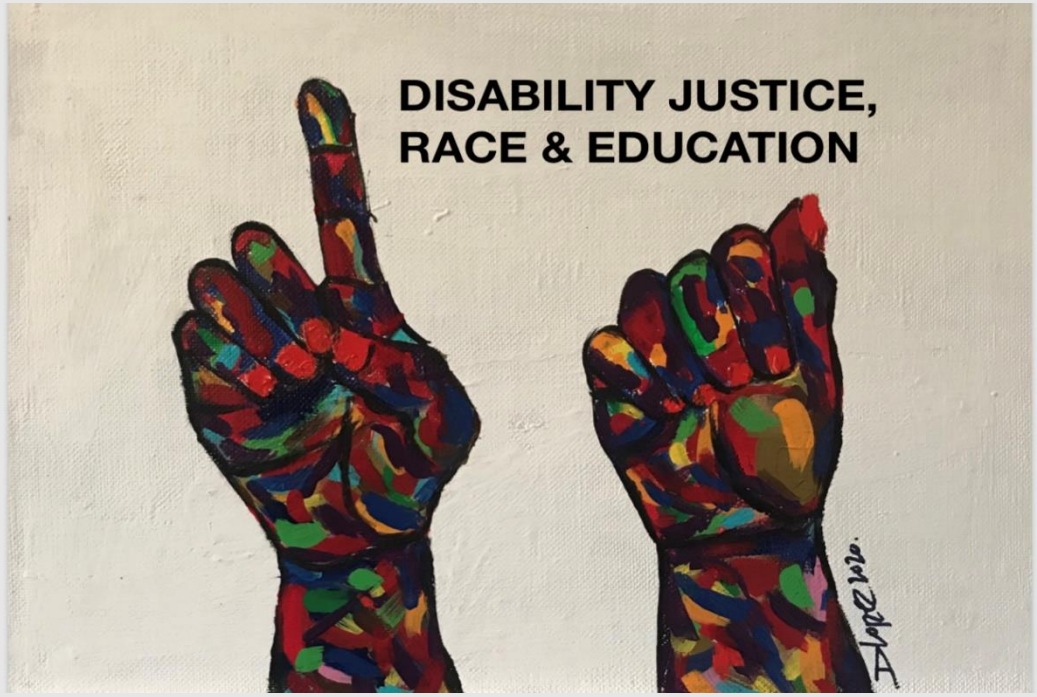
Antiracism	·Rethinking Practices that put Minority Discourse at Bottom of Linguistic Hierarchy ·Addressing Stigmatization and Oppression of Black Language
Translingualism	·Integrating Multilingual Students into Academic Discourse ·Creating Space for Evolving English Practices
Gender Inclusivity	·Inclusive, Safe, & Affirming Community for Gender Expansive Individuals ·Loosen Restrictions and Limitations of Gender Normative & Binary Language Conventions

https://www.buffalo.edu/writing/inclusion.html

CEW's Practices: Our 4th Pillar

Disability Justice

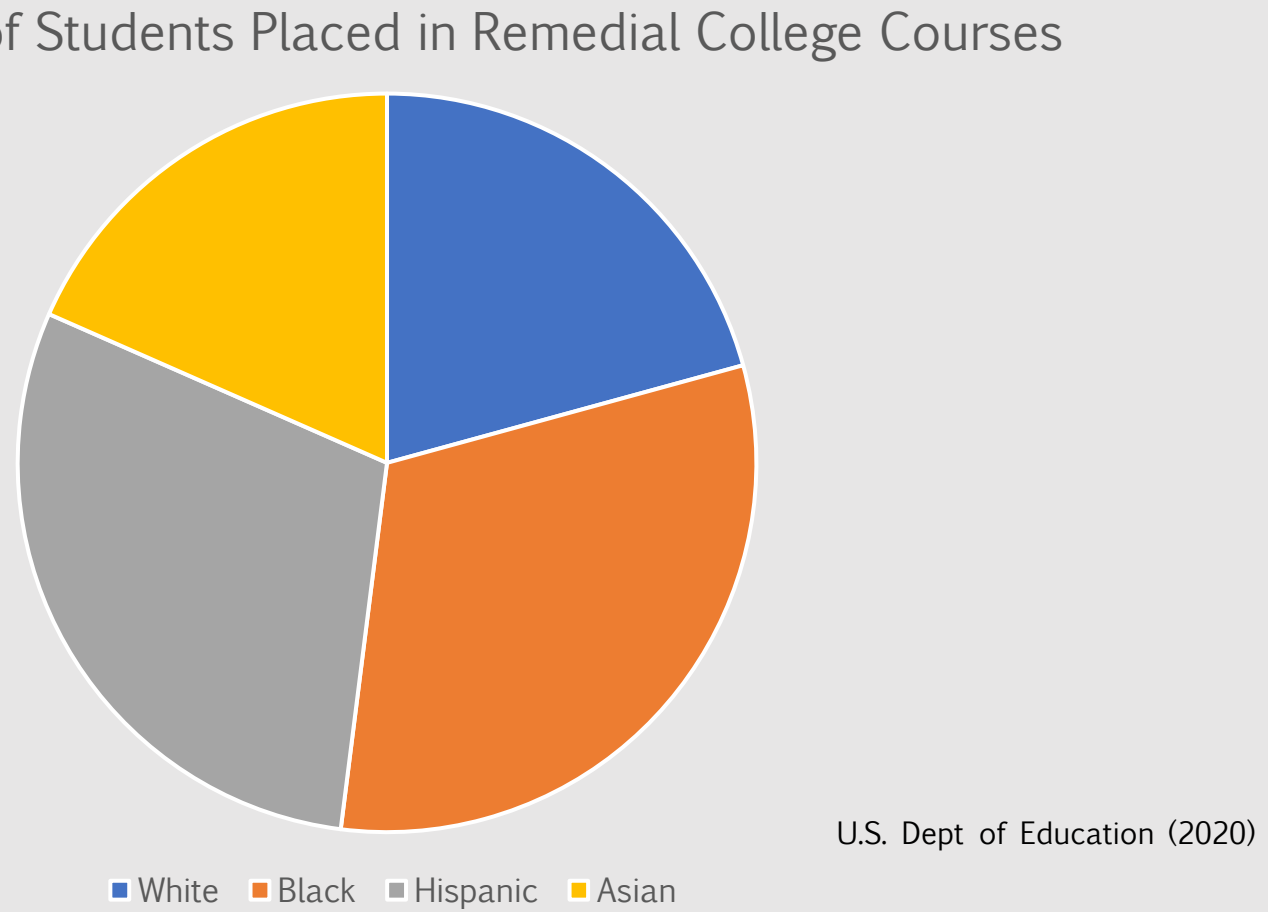
- Making the CEW more Accessible
- Understanding Disability Justice and Accessibility
- Building Accessible Learning/Writing Environment
- Promoting Literal Diversity in 1:1 Sessions
- Increasing Representation & Resonance
- Empowering Writers Living with Disability



Background: Language Oppression

- White Supremacy
- Standardized English/White Mainstream English
- Standardized Testing
- Deficit Model
- Institutionalized Racism
- Developmental Writing

Remedial College Courses



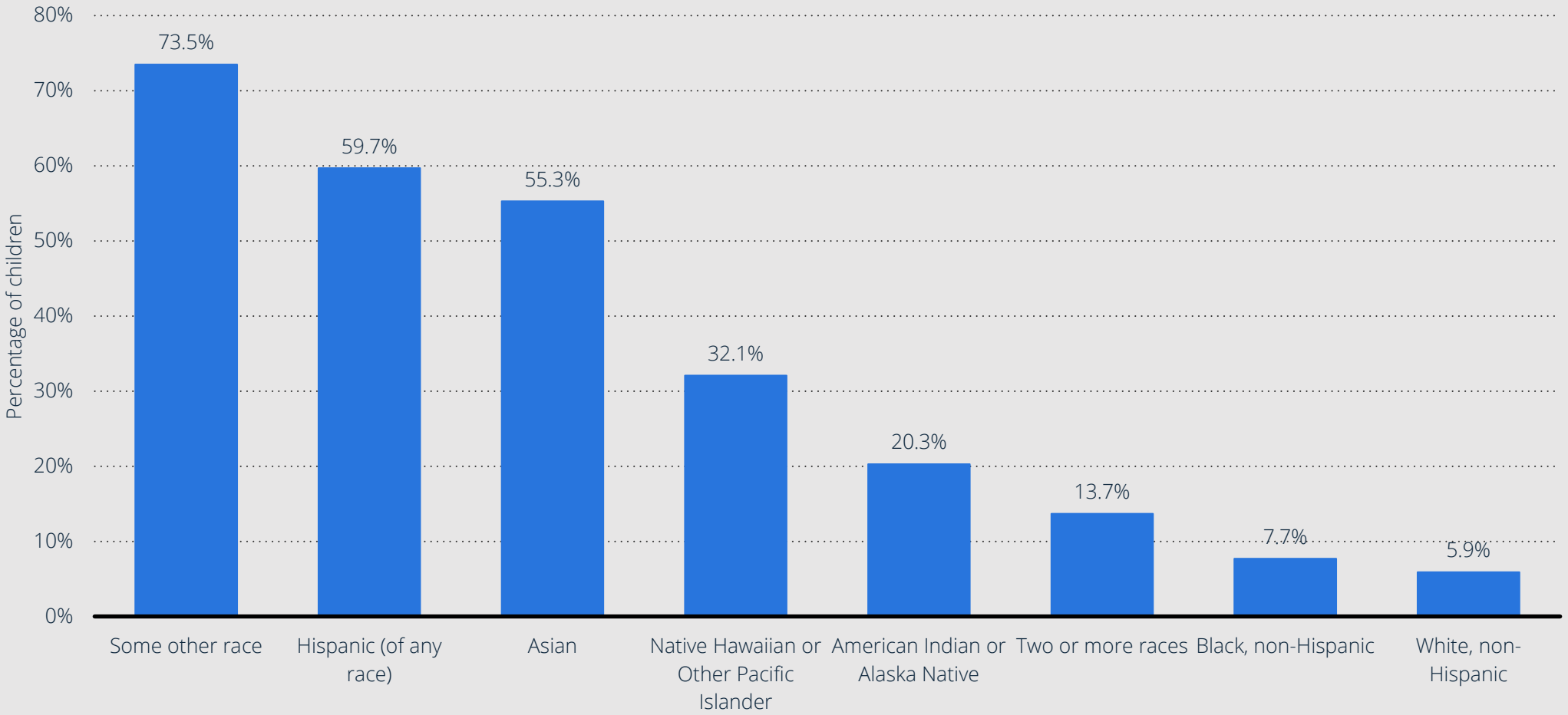
U.S. Dept of Education (2020)

Examples of Language Oppression in Writing

- Avoids discussing differences
- Erases differences
- Assumes uniform readership
- Minimizes significance of discrimination
- Speaks of oppression as only in the past
- Exoticizes
- Presents stereotypes as evidence
- Disrespects sources from "other" perspectives
- Fails to distinguish sources' views from writers' own
- Misunderstands or misrelates sources' view

(Suhr-Sytsma & Brown, 2011, p. 22)

Children Who Speak Another Language at Home

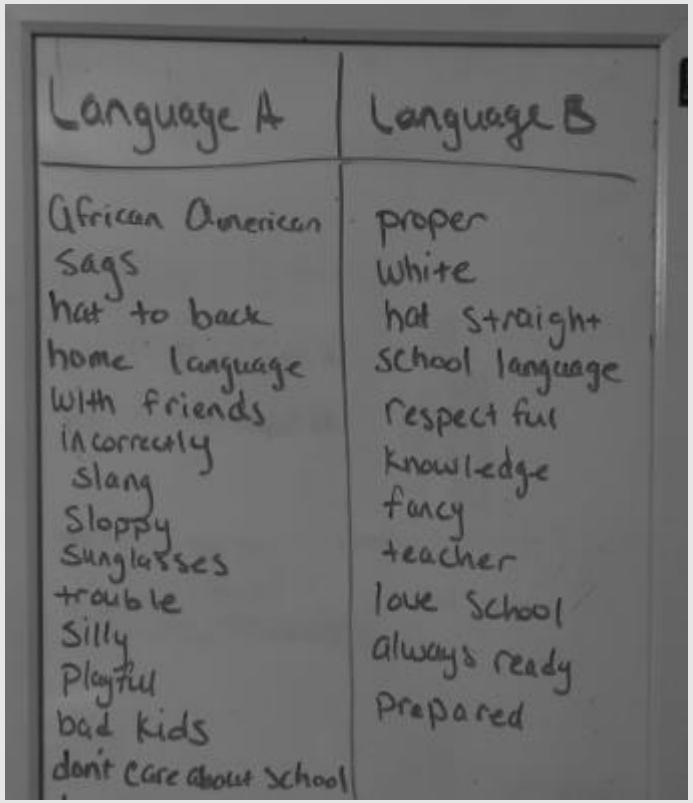


Note(s): United States; 2019; 5 to 17 years
Further information regarding this statistic can be found on page 8.
Source(s): ChildStats.gov; US Census Bureau; ID 476816

Linguistic Racism

- What is Linguistic Racism
- Anti-Blackness
- Examples of Linguistic Racism
- Code Switching
- Impact of Linguistic Racism

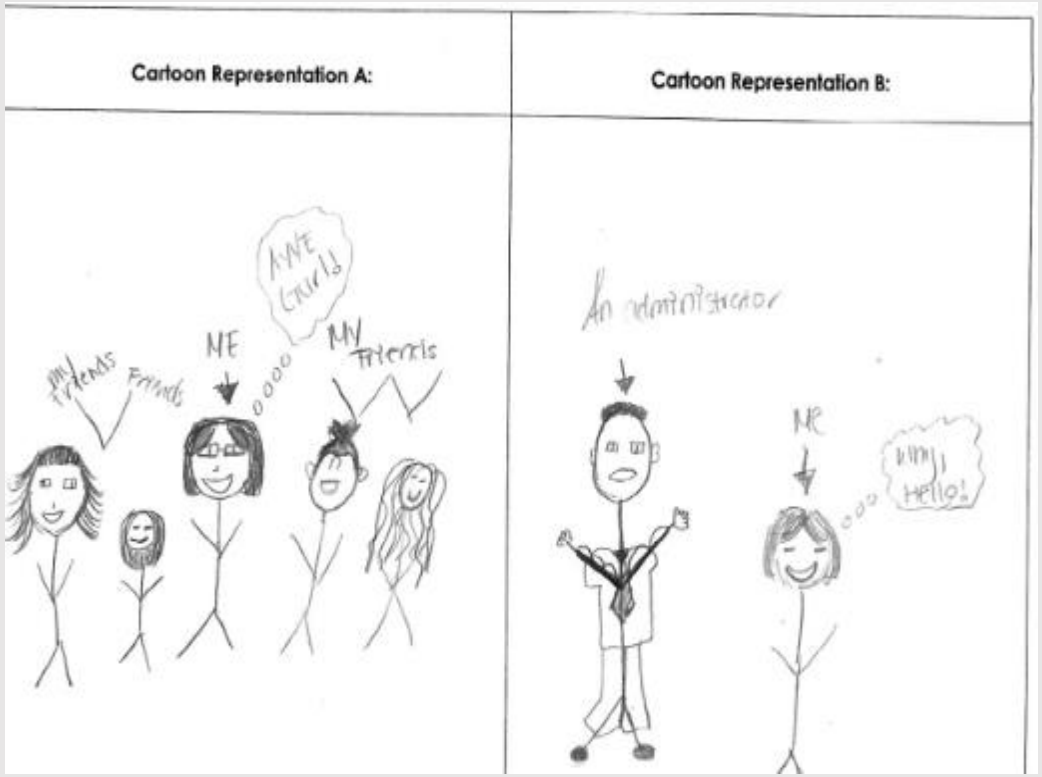
Impact of Linguistic Racism



Language A	Language B
African American	proper
Sags	White
hat to back	hat straight
home language	school language
With friends	respect ful
incorrectly	knowledge
slang	fancy
Sloppy	teacher
Sunglasses	love school
trouble	always ready
Silly	Prepared
Playful	
bad kids	
don't care about school	

Responses Collected in Dry Erase Board

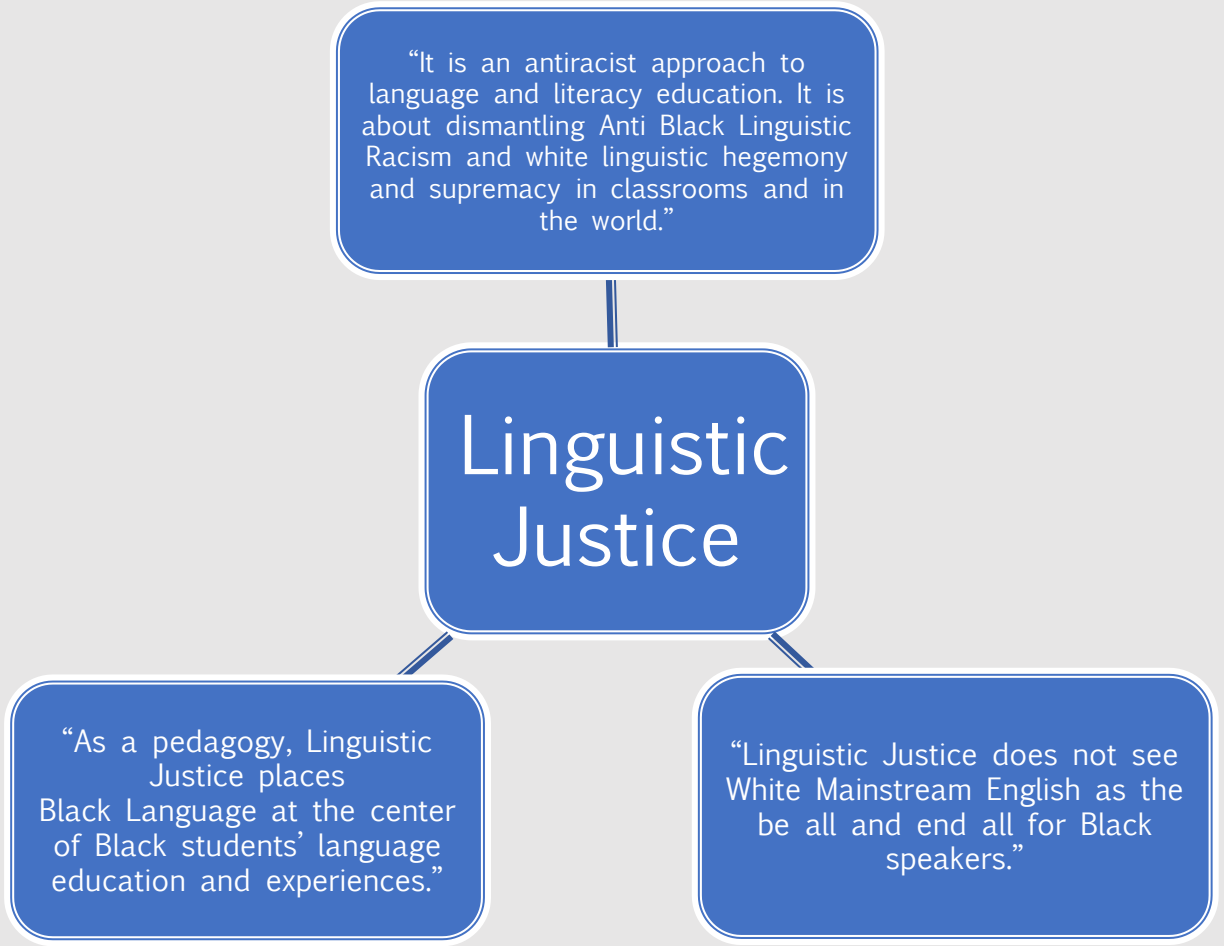
(Baker-Bell, 2020, p. 47)



Janel's Drawing on Attitudinal Assessment

(Baker-Bell, 2020, p. 51)

Linguistic Justice



(Baker-Bell, 2020, p. 7)

A Translingual Approach

Approach One

Extends CCCC Resolution

Students' Right to Their Own Language

Varieties of English are not Defective

Speakers of varieties of English are not substandard

Approach Two

Formation & definition of languages and language varieties are fluid

Language differences & fluidities are resources

Read with patience; respect differences; have attitude of deliberative inquiry

Approach Three

Question language practices, especially dominant ones

Calls for more… not less: critical attention to diction, syntax, style, form, register, & media

Approach Four

Ask writers what they do with language and why

Addresses gap between language practices and myths spread through political works

(Horner et al., 2011, pp. 304-306)

A Translingual Approach

Monolingual Approach	Translingual Approach
Standard written English and dominant dialects are the appropriate forms of communication for academic environments.	Students should be able to bring all of their linguistic resources into the classroom.
An ideal academic language environment is one in which we are using a common language in both written and standard forms. Alternate forms are either inferior or should be relegated to other environments such as home, country, or family home.	An ideal language environment is one which is inclusive, flexible, and evolving to meet the various rhetorical demands of a global society.
Language differences are a problem to be eradicated or overcome.	Language differences are an asset to be engaged to create richer, more responsive linguistic environments.
ESL students are at a disadvantage when compared with other students.	Being multilingual is a significant asset.
Language difference in written texts is destabilizing and threatening	Differences in language can be deployed effectively to enhance our rhetorical range.

Ways to Support Multilingual Students in Writing

- Develop an asset lens toward multilingualism (Attitude/disposition).
- Focus upon clarity of ideas rather than language standardization.
- Develop a tolerance for “ESL Markers” and accented English which reflects a writer’s global identity.
- Understand that language differences may not be errors, but rather forms imported from their home language.
- Example: word order; organizational patterns.
- Think of *engaging* difference rather than *eradicating* it.
- Help students along on their (lengthy) developmental journey.
- Encourage students to use all of their linguistic resources in their education.
- Be open to “code-meshing” if it is rhetorically effective.
- Rest assured that students can develop their English without being subject to language discrimination and a deficit lens.

HOW DO WE ELIMINATE OPPRESSIVE LANGUAGE

Explicit Training

Collaboration to Identify Oppressive Language

How Can We Strive To Eliminate Oppressive Language?

- Clarify meanings together
- Express understanding of one another's meanings
- Discuss meaning and use of sources
- Pose counterarguments
- Maintain a non-combative tone
- Address language without accusations of intentional oppression
- Name the “elephant in the room”
- Learn to better identify and address language that perpetuates oppression

(Suhr-Sytsma & Brown, 2011, p. 22)

PRACTICES THAT PROMOTE LINGUISTIC JUSTICE

Antiracist Black Language Education and Pedagogy

Antiracist Black Language Education and Pedagogy

- Critically Interrogates white linguistic hegemony & Anti Black Linguistic Racism
- **Names and works to dismantle the Anti-Black Linguistic Racism in …teacher …**
- **Places needs of Black students at center of their language education**
- **Informed by Black Language research tradition**
- **Rejects myth that WME that oppresses Black students can empower them**

- Acknowledges that BL is connected to Black people's ways of knowing…
- **Involves Black Linguistic Consciousness…**
- **Provides Black student with critical literacies and competencies…**
- **Conscientizes Black students the historical, cultural, political, and racial underpinnings of BL**
- **Relies on BL oral and literary traditions to build linguistic flexibility and creativity of Black students**

(Baker-Bell, 2020)

Antiracist Writing Pedagogies: Black Linguistic Justice

A New Way Forward:

- Radical Self-work and Positionality
- Language Policies
- Rethinking Writing Pedagogy
- Black Linguistic Consciousness-Raising

(Baker-Bell Reflective Questions, 2021)

What is Your Writing Pedagogy?

Does Your Writing Pedagogy…

- Standard English equals Success
- Black Language is not a linguistic system
- White Linguistic supremacy
- Upholds linguistic hierarchies
- Prepare students to write for monolithic white-centered audience
- Promote monolingual writing practices
- Makes no space for students to create writerly identities
- Does not encourage critique or sharing

What are your Writing Rules?

(Baker-Bell Reflective Questions, 2021)

Dr. Jamila Lyiscott – 3 Ways to Speak English

- Listen to the poem
- What is it saying to you?

DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

Reflection Questions

Question One

- What would diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism look like in terms of writing and language learning in academia?

Question Two

- What is the current situation for marginalized students in terms of writing and language learning in academia?

Question Three

- What are some of the ways in which UB can take action to eliminate language oppression and linguistic racism?

Question Four

- What new practices and knowledge can you pack in your suitcase that promotes linguistic justice and eliminates language oppression?

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THANK YOU!

Dr. Odette Reid & Dr. Rhonda Reid.
University at Buffalo
Center for Excellence in Writing