

Importing Canagarajah's global English theories

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ABSTRACT: Should an academic have respect toward cultural differences, including variety in language? A. Suresh Canagarajah has written extensively about global English and its power over vernacular languages, stressing that language learning is not a politically neutral activity. English teachers carry with them the possibility of ideological domination and linguistic imperialism, so he urges language teachers to critically examine their hidden curricula. If these concepts are considered in the Periphery, do they also apply to the Centre? These linguistic concepts can prepare English teachers to understand the controversies surrounding Standard English as a prestige dialect and help them to gain respect towards home languages of all students. Sociolinguists confirm that identity depends on one's home language, yet many still use a deficit perspective on any language not deemed Standard English. More respectful attitudes can build a bridge to speakers of non-prestige dialects, opening doors for students where entrance has traditionally been denied. Often, people judge use of a non-standard variety as a sign indicating lack of education. What an irony that such a judgment actually signals a lack of linguistic education.

KEYWORDS: Canagarajah, home language, linguistic imperialism, Standard English, World Englishes.

Recently, I entered a government office. Actually, it was a small office adjacent to a state warehouse where volunteers and government workers pick up supplies for community projects. As I waited for the office worker to fill my order, I glanced over a number of posters on the wall near his desk. One was a close-up photo of an American flag. Black letters in the caption read, "Why the hell do I have to press '1' for English?" Like most posters, bumper stickers or slogans, this gave me a lot to think about. I thought of a popular linguistics text titled, *Language: The social mirror* by Elaine Chaika (1994). I pondered how language is wrapped up in emotions about politics, social structures, class issues, economic struggles, and how it even helps form our own identity.

As an English teacher in composition and grammar, I am continually amazed at the power of language. That power is wielded, in part, by all of us who are involved in language instruction. Award-winning author, A. Suresh Canagarajah, of the CUNY Graduate Centre in New York, has written extensively about global English, especially concerning its power and domination over vernacular languages, stressing that language learning is not a politically neutral activity. English teachers carry with them the possibility of ideological domination and linguistic imperialism, so he urges teachers to critically examine their hidden curricula. Can we import Canagarajah's global English theories to expand our understanding of language in our own communities? Canagarajah's global English concepts can prepare English teachers to grasp the

controversies surrounding Standard English as a prestige dialect and help them to gain respect towards home languages of all students.

CANAGARAJAH'S MAIN CONTENTIONS ABOUT WORLD ENGLISHES

Canagarajah strives to defeat the monolingual state of mind. His background and experience with World Englishes give him a foundation for encouraging, not discouraging linguistic diversity. English has been exported to all of the world. Because English has become the global lingua franca, some assume that this means a monolingual world. However, language is a fascinating natural phenomenon. Despite efforts to control and dictate any linguistic change, natural forces continue to thrust English into more and more diverse patterns. Because English is used by so many people, it is changing perhaps faster than any other language.

One of the first and most influential of “linguistic conservators,” Dr. Samuel Johnson, knew that language change could not be stopped. Butters (2000) quotes him as saying that, “to enchain syllables and to lash the wind are equally the undertakings of pride, unwilling to measure its desire by its strength” (p. 283). Butters (2000) goes on to claim that some native speakers are so anxious about this change that, in their minds, its threat is equal to a natural disaster. Yet, he points out, trying to stop it is just as futile as trying to stop earthquakes, hurricanes or tornadoes. Any language that gets used feels that force of change and, currently, English is the most used language in the world.

Kachru explained this with his concentric circles of World Englishes. The innermost circle represents those countries that regard English as their mother language, which are the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand and Australia (as cited in Smitherman, 2003). Even among themselves, these countries have strikingly different varieties of their own standardized English. Over the past centuries, they have colonized and exported their “mother tongue” with military and economic power but that power has not been able to control or contain the change that globalization has exerted upon the language. Canagarajah (1999) refers to this group of countries as the “Centre”.

The next circle moving outward includes countries using English as an institutional language in former and current British and American colonies, such as Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Malaysia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and other Caribbean countries (Kachru, as cited in Smitherman, 2003). It is from the intense use of English within these countries that we now have such impressive variations and these variations can now be labeled by linguists as Standard Indian English, Standard Sri Lankan English, and so on.

Kachru's outermost and expanding circle is made up of countries where people learn English as a foreign language, including China, Egypt, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Korea, Nepal, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, and various South American countries (as cited in Smitherman, 2003). Canagarajah (1999) refers to both the latter two circles as the “Periphery” and he notes that there may be a whole new way to view “native speaker”.

Many speakers in the Periphery use English as the first or dominant language; others may use it as a language that was simultaneously acquired with one or more local languages, and may display equal or native proficiency in them all. Add to this the argument that many of the Periphery communities have developed their own localized forms of English and might consider themselves to be native speakers of these new “Englishes” (p. 4).

This amount of variation in English appalls or even terrifies some who may think there is a “purity” to be defended. Some appeal to logic when they claim that communication demands a common tongue.

But could it be that they feel some of their own personal power threatened if the superiority of their own dialect is questioned? If clear communication is the goal, what does that require? Apparently, a common standardized dialect does not guarantee clarity and understanding because the degree of miscommunication in today’s Standard English discourse is staggering. Consider a different framework. In a multilingual society, tolerance and respect for others are encouraged. Inclusion can become an intrinsic social value when members of a multilingual community must make an effort to allow for each other’s languages to be respected. Canagarajah (1999) says this fosters “the creative processes of linguistic mediation, interaction and fusion to take place in social life” (p. 3).

By “yielding” or reaching out to others linguistically, we as members of society can learn to negotiate meaning, and to not assume that everyone else must accept our own semantic position. That skill is critical to understanding others. We need to practice understanding each other whether we use the same lexicon or not. A little less pride and a little more humility can go far in making people better communicators. As Canagarajah (2006) states,

Some of the intuitive strategies that multilingual people use for communication come to our rescue. According to speech accommodation theory (see Giles), multilingual people always make adjustments to each other as they modify their accent or syntax to facilitate communication with those who are not proficient in their language. Furthermore, they come with psychological and attitudinal resources, such as patience, tolerance, and humility, to negotiate the differences of interlocutors (see Higgins). A refusal to deal with difference or cooperate with an interlocutor is not congenial for communication – even when the language of both speakers is the same! (p. 593)

Alastair Pennycook explains the dichotomy of global English as tempting us with the illusion of unified global communication on the one hand while on the other hand English “is linked to inequality, injustice and the prevention of communication. Thus when we talk of language communities and the possible benefits of communication they may bring, we must also consider who is simultaneously left out of such cultural empires and what the consequences may be” (2005, p. 2). Insisting that access to power requires one language will exclude more people than are included.

Phillipson (1992), in his text *Linguistic imperialism*, studied the spread of English in Africa as an example of the way the dominant group differentiates itself from and stigmatizes the dominated group. Consider these loaded terms. “The rule is that we are a nation with a language, whereas they are a tribe with a dialect” (p. 38). We can all

criticize colonial policies we might think are in the past, but Canagarajah (2002) maintains that the “issues of power and difference have simply become more subtle and dispersed” (p. 11). He also points out that deficit linguistics, or the belief that one dialect is inherently superior to another, is a limiting perspective. To view linguistic differences as a resource, instead of a predicament, gives us more complexity, more understanding and more possibility.

Pennycook (2005) elaborates on the consequences of being left out of a prestige language community by claiming that English is “linked to forms of institutionalized power [and that it] functions as a class-based language with tension between local, multiple vernacular languages and the monolingualism of the language of power” (p. 2). Tollefson agrees, “at a time when English is widely seen as key to the economic success of nations and the economic well-being of individuals, the spread of English also contributes to significant social, political and economic inequalities” (as cited in Pennycook, 2005, p. 4).

So how should one's personal position as an English teacher be viewed? Does the global spread of English bring more prosperity or more exploitation? Phillipson claims that English language teaching has been a tool of colonialism and subjugation (as cited in Pennycook, 2005, p. 4). Pennycook (1998) adds that, “The example of English language education is, of course, both a continuation of the racist hierarchies of colonial rule and of the colonial construction of the inherent superiority of the native speaker” (p. 194).

To deal with this charge, Canagarajah (1999) describes two approaches to teaching language. One is to continue the present attitude toward Standard English, to reproduce in the future what we have right now. He refers to this approach as Mainstream Pedagogy. The second approach carefully questions and examines any current teaching practice from different angles of vision. He refers to this as Critical Pedagogy. Critical Pedagogy does not just accept that Standard English is inherently more eloquent, expressive and articulate and, therefore, better than any other language. Critical Pedagogy recognizes that, along with accepting a dominant language, one also implicitly accepts the politics, ideologies, racial tenets and economic values of that dominant group. Language is inseparably entangled in the culture of any group. To accept or adopt a language is to accept or adopt that culture. That is why Canagarajah refers to English in the Periphery as a Trojan horse that can perpetuate colonialism and dependence.

Canagarajah (1999) contrasts these two pedagogical approaches. Mainstream Pedagogy regards learning as being separate and above, untouched by all other personal concerns, and holds that all people learn the same way. However, Critical Pedagogy sees learning as involving all of a person's personal background, influenced by everything else in one's environment especially one's own cultural traditions and social practices. Mainstream Pedagogy views knowledge as simple undisputed facts that are innocently passed on, but Critical Pedagogy recognizes that knowledge may be relative, contested and highly political and that teaching always involves transfer of some kind of values. Canagarajah (1999) advocates a Critical Pedagogical approach because “teachers have the ethical

responsibility of negotiating the hidden values and interests behind knowledge, and are expected to help students to adopt a critical orientation to learning” (p. 17).

If multilingualism can reduce conflict in the Periphery, perhaps it will also work in the Centre. The bald truth is, there is not just one Standard English. Like it or not, diversity has come our way. Just as the forces of change and influence have extended outward from the Centre of Kachru's World Englishes circles, so also have the forces reversed, and change is permeating from the Periphery back into the Centre. Can Canagarajah's ideas about dealing with diversity in the Periphery also give us solutions for dealing with it in the Centre?

CAN WE IMPORT BACK CANAGARAJAH'S THEORIES TO APPLY TO DIVERSE LANGUAGE COMMUNITIES WITHIN THE CENTRE?

Canagarajah (1999) suggests that because learning is not a “value-free, pragmatic and egalitarian enterprise, education has lost its innocence” (p. 17). I question if it ever was innocent. Doesn't schooling always somehow promote the politics, values and ideas held by a dominant social group? Insisting on privileging Standard English exclusively intensifies the power of that dominant group and marginalizes all others.

So as language teachers and participants in that not-so-innocent process, we need to critically examine our own hidden curricula in whatever language community we may work in. Evidence for this was presented to me in a paper from one of my freshman composition students. This non-traditional student also works as a teacher's aid in a local elementary school. She chose to write about the immigration issue here in the Western United States. She expressed concern that teachers bore a great burden if non-English speaking, undocumented students were allowed to register for public school. She wrote, “This can create a strain on teachers, if you have a student who doesn't want to learn the language, or for some reason known only to them, they fake that they don't know the language.” She expressed concern that non-English-speaking parents do not effectively help their children in school, and that ESL students slow other students' progress and negatively affect the rest of the class. She concluded with the comment:

The more information I got on this topic, the angrier I got. I started firing off letters to my congressmen, senators and even to the President of the United States. I can't say that I know or that I found all the answers to solve this problem. I don't believe that the answer is going to come from any one person. I also have mixed feelings since you sort of get attached to a kid calling you “Senorita” while giving you a hug. But some sort of solution must be out there, some compromise that will satisfy all parties.

As we try to read between the lines and understand her angle of vision, this confirms that intense emotions are entangled into language and culture. Canagarajah (1999) tells us that learning is not just a cognitive function, but that “socio-cultural conditions always influence our cognitive activity” (p. 14).

I consider how I can apply Canagarajah's critical pedagogy to my student's essay on three levels: 1) to help the writer and how she examines her topic, 2) to enlighten the writer and how she interacts with her students, especially those who call her "Senorita", and finally, 3) to guide me and how I interact with this student, whose views may differ from my own. Critical pedagogy can inform us all as we strive to communicate more effectively in a diverse world. How could critical pedagogy help my student as she explores and examines her topic? Striving to see more than our initial angle of vision is at the heart of scholarly work. Firstly, if she is required to use scholarly sources, she can be exposed to those multiple angles with less heat, manipulation and confrontation than some current, popular media promote so blatantly. If Canagarajah (1999) is right, then I, as her teacher, have the ethical responsibility to not just interrogate my own hidden values and beliefs about language but to also help my students "adopt a critical orientation to learning" (p. 17). So, I would encourage her to write reflectively about the sources of her beliefs.

In a persuasive writing unit, I have often used an activity called "Bias Experiment". I divide students into small groups and give each group a card with a piece of true information about me. These include such things as, "In just three months the teacher visited the police station eleven times" or "The FBI has investigated the teacher's husband" or "While attending a church-affiliated university, the teacher flunked a religion class." By the way, these are true but I don't give the full context. I went to the police station to teach grammar and writing to officers hoping to get a promotion but who needed better writing skills. My husband had to get a security clearance for his job and, okay, I just plain flunked the religion class. I never tell the students the full context but ask them to discuss for two minutes if this new information changes their bias about me. I ask them to not disclose if their bias toward me was positive or negative but to only report if they felt a change.

I get lots of different results but I have always had a minority report a change of bias. The activity doesn't really prove anything, but does get their attention and focus their thinking on how difficult it may be to change someone's bias because we hear what we want to hear and see what we want to see, always confirming our previously held beliefs. I point out that we all have a "hidden curriculum", and analyzing the source of our own beliefs and opinions can help us understand others. I have them free-write about their bias on the topic they have chosen to write about persuasively. I have learned the hard way to remind them to not write about why their bias is justified but to analyze its source in their background. Hopefully, we can all "interrogate our hidden assumptions" (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 16).

Can Canagarajah help me enable my student-teacher to understand multiple perspectives and can he influence how she interacts with her elementary students, especially the ones who call her "Senorita"? Is there a Periphery within our own community? How would we describe that subjugated, marginalized group that is affected by cultural aspects of the dominant group, especially language? Do I have a right to try to influence my student's "hidden assumptions"? Canagarajah would answer not only do I have a right – I have a moral obligation. There are some of our beliefs that may differ but both views could

remain ethical. That is not the case here. If children are being exploited, discriminated against and subjugated, that is morally wrong. As Canagarajah (1999) points out,

Resistance perspectives theorize the possibility that the counter-knowledge of subaltern groups has its own critical insights to demystify the dominant ideologies and empower them to achieve their own interests. This view also assumes that the knowledge/power interconnection is not always pejorative – that there are ethically responsible forms of knowledge for liberatory purposes (p. 32).

Even though knowledge is socially constructed, there are some absolute measures of ethical behaviour. It is our responsibility to include that in our curriculum.

Now I must apply Canagarajah to myself. How should I interact with this student whose views differ from my own? One concept that seems to be repeated in Canagarajah's writing is respect for those with less power. While I have a moral obligation to inform students against what I feel is unethical, I can do it with respect, humility and professionalism. That professionalism should include a critical pedagogy that reminds me that knowledge is negotiated, thought through and value-laden.

An aspect of professionalism is to not approach differences of opinion about language with an attitude of "which side will win"? Canagarajah (1999) uses the example of his home community and the Tamil language:

If Tamil is becoming Englishized, it could be said that local communities are getting even with English by Tamilizing it. This process has oppositional implications in the context of the burgeoning "English Only" and "Standard English" movements of the Centre. The subtle forms of vernacularizing English we have seen...show the extension of the tradition of linguistic appropriation... (p. 76).

He then explains how the two forces of globalization and nationalism or sometimes factionalism are competing trends that "exacerbate each other" (p. 76). With these opposite forces on the language we might ask which side will win, but Canagarajah (1999) asks instead:

Rather than asking which tendency is going to win over the other, the more important questions to pose are: How do people learn to live with these tensions in their everyday life: How do they transform these constraints in their favour? How do they creatively manipulate these tensions to conduct their life with dignity and self-determination? The manner in which the Tamil community appropriates English to dynamically negotiate meaning, identity, and status in contextually suitable and socially strategic ways, and in the process modifies the communicative and linguistic rules of English according to local cultural and ideological imperatives, is very instructive. These are the strategies by which the powerless carve a niche for themselves in the face of historical forces (p. 76).

This non-confrontational and humane attitude serves as an effective guide as I interact with all my students.

As I critically examine myself in this not-so-innocent process. I must also examine the materials I use. Canagarajah (1999) describes the example of how texts written in the Centre but used in the Periphery are inappropriate and result in disconnected pedagogies. The reason they are inappropriate is that they are culturally saturated with life in the Centre where the content addresses students who have well-organized, economically secure and goal directed lives. Contrast that to the Periphery where there may be, as Canagarajah (1999) puts it, “mental and social chaos” (p. 12). The same applies to the Periphery in our community that is not part of the dominant socio-economic power. If we try to study and respect the Periphery globally, then surely we should be equally concerned about those who are marginalized but are also our neighbors. Interestingly, people seem to find it easier to tolerate diversity that is distant but not local.

If that is part of the natural human reaction, then how can we hope to make any difference for those who remain subjugated? “Natural” can mean “first reaction” or uninformed, less analyzed response. Education in a critical pedagogy could make a difference. I experienced an example of this in an unlikely place – old television shows.

Watching old television shows can be nostalgic but can also provide stunning evidence that our angle of vision has changed toward cultural values. Recently, I watched several episodes of an American, police detective show from the 1970's – Hawaii Five O – and was shocked at how subservient the Polynesian characters were to the whites. Any roles of strength or heroism always seemed to be performed by a white actor. In one particular episode, the Polynesian actors either gave humble obedience to their white superiors or recklessly disobeyed and ended up being killed. The hero who saved the day was “Danno,” a young white detective. As he climbed the hill on his dangerous mission toward the sniper, I asked out loud, “Why did he get to be the hero and not Chin or Kono?” My husband answered, “Because he's white so we know he won't get killed.” I also viewed reruns of the Andy Griffith show from the 1960's and wondered why, in that quaint, little U.S. Southern town of Mayberry, did African-Americans not exist? How could I not have noticed those things decades ago? Study of post-colonialism, multicultural ideals and racial attitudes have given me a new angle of vision and made racial discrimination obvious though I was blind to it before. A critical pedagogy can also make one more aware of how language can be a tool of subjugation.

Terrence Wiley helps us apply some of these global theories to the United States, when he concludes that “throughout the U.S. history there has always been the pressure of linguistic assimilation, be it explicit or implicit. Furthermore, language has always been exploited as a means of social control” (as cited in Ricento, 2000, pp. 2-3). How, then, can I avoid being part of this subjugation in my teaching? Next we turn to some practical solutions so we as teachers do not take part in the exploitation but, instead, educate against it.

WHAT OUTCOMES CAN WE EXPECT FROM IMPORTING THESE THEORIES?

Outcome #1 – We could have a more linguistically informed perspective on teaching language.

The first outcome is that we learn the linguistic truth about Standard English. It is a dialect and is not inherently more logical, consistent or more expressive than any other dialect. It is the dialect of the educated, middle-class and, because they have the money and power to do so, they label their dialect as “correct”, or standard. If the people who spoke African American Vernacular (AAV) had the money and power to label their dialect as standard, it would be, but they don't, so it isn't, and that's the only reason it isn't (Ebbitt & Ebbitt, 1990).

Several centuries ago, language became a class marker for English-speakers and so any dialect not spoken by the rich and powerful became tainted and labeled as lower class, uneducated and “incorrect” (Graddol, 1996). However, linguists tell us that all dialects are rule-governed and follow a grammatical system. As Wheeler and Swords (2004) explain, even though generations of teachers have corrected, maligned or disparaged any student language that varied from “the standard written target, a different response to language becomes possible once we recognize that language comes in different varieties and styles, and each is systematic and rule-governed” (p. 473). This linguistic fact is key in helping students in any Periphery to become upwardly mobile and still retain respect for themselves and for their heritage. Wheeler and Swords (2004) confirm this:

English teachers routinely equate Standard English with “grammar,” as if other language varieties and styles lack grammar, the systematic and rule-governed backbone of language. Yet, the child who speaks in a vernacular dialect is not making language errors; instead, she or he is speaking correctly in the language of the home discourse community (p. 471).

A major barrier for language students is that their teachers, administrators, parents and the general public are not linguistically informed and still believe that varieties in language can be labeled as “good” or “bad”. A centuries-old stigma is difficult to change, but education has often achieved that goal. Wheeler and Swords (2004) define it clearly:

While variation in language structure is always present, a different kind of variation lies in the public's attitudes toward language. “Standard” English is often called “good” English while “non-standard” English is considered “bad”. These judgments are not based on linguistic grounds, but on sociopolitical considerations (p. 473).

It becomes especially clear in light of Canagarajah's theories and a study of World Englishes that most English speaking communities also have their own regional peripheries, where residents speaking dialects are unfairly disparaged. How ironic that judging a non-standard dialect as a sign of lack of education actually reflects a lack of linguistic education.

Outcome #2 – Our concept of human rights could include language rights.

I must clarify loudly – I am NOT advocating that “anything goes”. It is still important for students to learn Standard English. We cannot change the worldly reality that the ability to speak and write in Standard is required to increase the opportunity for success. However, we can change the way teachers treat students who speak other home languages and we can change teachers’ attitudes toward those varieties of language. It is another linguistic truth that a person’s identity is wrapped up in his or her language. If we attack the language, we attack the person and his or her home, roots and heritage. According to Wheeler and Swords (2004),

It is clearly the case that when an urban teacher tells minority-language students that their language is wrong and error-filled, she creates a seriously deleterious effect in the classroom. As the teacher seeks to eradicate vernacular language and culture, not only does she remove a link that could bring relevance to the classroom lives of the children, but she assails the child’s family and home community, thus contributing to a barrier between the values of home and school (p. 471).

As June Jordan expressed it, “Black children in America must acquire competence in white English, for the sake of self-preservation: but you will never teach a child a new language by scorning and ridiculing and forcibly erasing his first language” (as cited in Kinloch, 2005, p. 83)

Many strong American scholars have worked hard for decades to advocate for students who bring home languages to school that are not Standard. In 1974 the Conference on College Composition and Communication passed a resolution entitled Students’ Right to Their Own Language, yet somehow many people think this is a very new idea (Kinloch 2005). This underscores the lack of linguistic education in our field.

Smitherman chose to explain the danger of this in African American Vernacular terms, “When you lambast the home language that kids bring to school, you ain just dissin dem, you takin bout they momas! Check out the concept of ‘Mother Tongue’” (as cited in Richardson, 2002, p. 677). Wheeler and Swords (2004) add, “...as teachers absorb ‘widespread, destructive myths about language variation’ (Wolfram, 1999, p. 78), their cultural vantage turns to pedagogical damage” (p. 472).

Not only does valuing home language strengthen students’ self esteem, it also helps them acquire other dialects such as Standard. Canagarajah (2006) agrees this is true on a global scale, “valuing students’ own languages – in this case, non-prestige varieties of English – helps in the acquisition of other dialects, including the socially valued dominant varieties” (p. 592). He goes on to detail why a monolingual classroom approach is ineffective and does not give students the skills they need.

A classroom based on “Standard” English and formal instruction limits the linguistic acquisition, creativity, and production among students...it is outside the classroom that students seem to develop communicative competence and negotiation strategies for “real

world” needs of multilingualism. Classes based on monolingual pedagogies disable students in contexts of linguistic pluralism (p. 592).

Our goal is not to disable but to enable students to be better communicators in a world where communication is changing rapidly.

Outcome #3 - When teachers help students bridge linguistic and cultural barriers, both the teachers and students find greater success.

The reason we know that respect for home languages brings about successful outcomes is because of the hard work and research on the frontlines, in the classroom, by many progressive and creative teachers in Periphery communities. As Lin and Martin (2005) observe, “positive bi- and multilingual pedagogical and curriculum practices do not simply jump out of the pages of educational theorists or critical deconstructionists, but are the hard-gained results of careful, situated classroom and curriculum studies in different sociocultural and institutional contexts” (p. 13).

After reviewing numerous studies that sought to explain minority school failure, Mermann-Jozwiak and Sullivan (2005) described the need for multilingualism,

The role of teachers is crucial in bridging cultural barriers. Teachers can create a climate of warmth and acceptance for language minority children, supporting the home language....School activities must be perceived by students as supportive of their culture and home values to promote their success in the classroom....Teachers need to acquire the skills that help them understand minority students' home cultures; that is, they need to be versed in local knowledges and become global citizens themselves (p. 271).

They go on to conclude, “A learning environment that values the students' cultures and languages, that allows students to engage in activities where they can show their expertise and that capitalizes on the students' linguistic and cultural experiences will foster academic success” (Mermann-Jozwiak & Sullivan, 2005, p. 273).

Mermann-Jozwiak and Sullivan (2005) applied these theories in a very practical way in public schools in South Texas. Unfortunately, as part of their study, they also found significant local hostility to languages other than English and numerous examples where people were denied language rights. They report,

Currently, students are asked to refrain from speaking Spanish in school with their friends, and local Corpus Christi employees have been reprimanded for speaking Spanish at work. As recently as 1995, a judge in Amarillo, Texas, demanded that a mother speak only English to her 5-year-old daughter, as speaking Spanish was a form of child abuse. The judge believed that the mother would be relegating the girl to a life as a maid if she spoke Spanish to her. These sentiments indicate the urgent need for dialogue and for education, particularly on the part of teachers. They are rarely trained to examine or identify their own beliefs about language minority students, and it is precisely these beliefs that can impact their students (p. 275).

Rebecca Wheeler and Rachel Swords (2004) have teamed up theory and application to show that accepting home languages of students can be very successful in elementary school. They have introduced students to “contrastive analysis”, taking phrases in AAV and contrasting them to Standard English. Students are asked to point out the differences. To ensure “even-handedness between the varieties” (p. 475), the teacher writes a Standard version on the left side and the AAV version on the right. In their joint article Swords explains her personal classroom method, “given our left-right reading conventions, I implicitly (and later explicitly) suggested that we might move not only from vernacular to standard, but also from standard to vernacular” (p. 475). At first, students may wonder which is “right” after schools have spent so many years of teaching correction, but with the analogy of formal/informal dress, they are encouraged to code-switch and choose the dialect that is appropriate for their audience and purpose.

In their article (2004), “Code-switching: Tools of language and culture transform the dialectically diverse classroom”, they describe specific successes in teaching the different ways the two dialects form plurals, possessives and other forms. A key part of their curriculum is to use AAV literature. It not only enriches the language experience, but children are able to practice code-switching by contrastive analysis of this resource. The literature also affirms respect for the home language.

Kinloch (2005) offers seven strategies for fulfilling the promise of Students’ Right to Their Own Language Resolution that have been successful in a college composition class. These include involving the students in discussion of the socioeconomics and politics that influence language policies. She also engages her students in discussion of linguistic concepts surrounding language rights and has them analyze both the language in pop culture and minority poets.

Nancy-Laurel Pettersen (2006) also shares methods used in college freshman composition courses. When any grammar issues come up in class, she helps students identify the type of audience and purpose when that language use would be appropriate. She uses labels such as “Grammar Book” or “Street.” She also gets students motivated by making a game out of editing their papers. They get points for finding items to edit, but she gets points for finding items they may have missed.

Canagarajah (2006) also has practical ideas for making a composition class multilingual. He encourages not just code-switching but code meshing and uses Geneva Smitherman’s academic writings that include phrases of AAV as an example. He quotes Peter Elbow as advocating two goals, “A good approach for handling contradiction is to introduce the dimension of time: to work for the long-range goal of changing the culture of literacy, and the short-range goal of helping students now” (as cited in Canagarajah, 2006, p. 597). In addition to using time, Canagarajah’s method is to add space through the code meshing, even in academic writing to ultimately change the culture of how we look at academic language.

CONCLUSION

The ultimate outcome is that everyone benefits with better ideas from more than just one perspective. That is the basic advantage of a democracy, that it not only gives a voice to all individuals but that we all gain from those voices. To take away a student's voice is to lose his or her unique gift we could have received. But what about the "English Only" poster that started my thoughts on multilingualism? How do we affect the attitude of someone immersed in a monolingual perspective? Many have tried to legislate language issues, but language is that natural phenomenon that refuses to be leashed. As shown by these examples of real teachers on the frontlines, critical pedagogy can be the key to bottom-up transformation of linguistic injustice. Rather than legislate, we need to educate. Monolingualists may appreciate our help as they become better prepared to cope with a world filling with multiple Englishes.

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