

## NOT YOUR STANDARD ENGLISH LANGUAGES ARTS CLASSROOM: Critical Language Awareness Pedagogies in Secondary English

### Abstract

With increasingly diverse student demographics and needs, there is growing scholarship recognizing the damaging impact of standardized language ideology on students who come into the classroom speaking minoritized dialects of English. Critical language awareness (CLA) pedagogies have been posed as ways to disrupt these ideologies in the classroom. This literature review addresses the questions How do U.S. secondary ELA teachers intentionally implement Critical Language Awareness pedagogies with students positioned as Standardized English Learners? and What factors limit teachers' ability to effectively implement such pedagogies?

I systemically review existing literature using an adapted version of Onwuegbuzie & Frel's (2016) seven-step model for literature reviews. Raciolinguistics was a theoretical framing for this review. I find that there are four leading frameworks for CLA pedagogies, and I provide characterizations of each. I also find that contradicting beliefs and practices are the greatest limitation in implementing those pedagogies, including race evasiveness and discounting students' own prior linguistic knowledge. Teacher education programs need to provide space for pre-service ELA teachers to work through contradicting language ideologies and how those ideologies are informed by concepts of race, and to develop pedagogical content knowledge in CLA.

Cultural mismatch theory asserts that there is a sociocultural gap between the cultural embodiments Black and minoritized students bring into the classroom and teachers' expectations and culture (Irvine, 2002). This gap, or mismatch, results in misunderstandings that lead to various inequitable outcomes for Black students (Elmesky & Marcucci, 2023) and has been used to explain academic achievement and disciplinary gaps between Black and white students in K-12 schools (Gregory et al., 2010). However, Elmesky and Marcucci (2023) argued that this mismatch is actually due to antiBlackness more than a "neutral" cultural difference, as the mismatched culture in question is often defined by its connection to Blackness. AntiBlackness, derived from Afro-Pessimism theory, recognizes both the long history of and the continued Black struggle for educational opportunity against "ideologies, discourses, representations, (mal) distribution of material resources, and physical and psychic assaults" (Dumas, 2016, p. 16). Understanding the cultural mismatch between Black students and the American school system in this way "highlights underlying and often invisible white cultural norms ... suggest[ing] that predominantly the white teaching force has white-normed behavioral expectations for its minoritized and racialized student body" (Elmesky & Marcucci, 2023, p. 774). Research has shown the damaging effects of cultural mismatches for Black students, which Bettina Love (2019) refers to as the "spirit murdering" of Black students.

One way this antiBlack cultural mismatch manifests is through linguistic racism. AntiBlack linguistic racism "refers to the linguistic violence, persecution, dehumanization, and marginalization that African American English2 (AAE) speakers endure when using their language in schools" (Baker-Bell, 2019, p. 2). Linguistic racism is maintained through "ideologies and practices that are utilized to conform, normalize, and reformulate an unequal and uneven linguistic power between language users" (Dovchin, 2019a, 2019b, as cited in De Costa, 2020). Alim (2007), Baker-Bell (2020b), and Kirkland (2010) have shown that due to linguistic racism, Black students are taught to deem AAE as inferior, "ghetto," and unacademic, resulting in internalized beliefs against their broader identity as students of color. Further, it "has been shown to inhibit the language and literacy learning" of AAE speaking students (Ball & Lardner, 2005; Kinloch, 2010; Kynard, 2013; Smitherman, 2020, as cited in Hankerson, 2023, p. 6).

AntiBlack linguistic racism occurs in schools through teachers "silencing, correcting, and policing" Black students' attempts to use AAE (Baker-Bell, 2019, p. 2). Traditionally, AAE has been approached in schools through an eradicationist pedagogy (Baker-Bell, 2020b), in which attempts were made to essentially remove the language and its rhetorical practices from the linguistic repertoire of Black students. Overtime, however, AAE was approached

with “respectability” based pedagogies (Baker-Bell, 2020b) in which the dialect was found to be legitimate and even affirmed but was uncritically seen as a bridge to further support the learning of a “standardized” English. In this pedagogy, AAE is not necessarily eradicated, but it is seen as inappropriate for academic settings (Baker-Bell, 2020b), essentially leaving Black students excluded from academic discourse (Hankerson, 2023). The notion of academic language, and its conflation with a “standardized” English, developed in the 1970s to address the linguistic mismatch between language used in and outside of schools (Gottlieb & Slavt-Ernst, 2014), came at a time of increased diversity in academic settings wherein students brought a wide variety of languaging practices into the classroom (Conference on College Composition and Communication, 1974). In response to increased cultural and linguistic diversity, white middle class languaging norms became the academic standard to which other dialects were measured against (Baker-Bell, 2020b; Flores & Rosa, 2015; Greenfield, 2011; Hankerson, 2023), which has a significant effect on students of color (Alim & Smitherman, 2012) who are more likely to be speakers of language varieties such as AAE (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2018).


This standardized English<sup>3</sup> (SE) represents the idea that there is one correct, common, and unmarked variety of English that is most “appropriate” for school, business, and other public settings (Davila, 2016). It is, therefore, a dialect socially privileged above others, such as AAE (Lippi-Green, 1997, 2012; Wiley & Lukes, 1996). However, there are no tenets of SE to define it (Reaser et al., 2017). Scholars assert that SE is a myth, as no one variety of a language such as English is inherently more correct than others, nor is it possible for a variety of a living language to be entirely stable (Greenfield, 2011; Lippi-Green, 1997, 2012; Reaser et al., 2017). It has been further found to be a racist myth, as it serves only to justify exclusion of racially oppressed speakers (Greenfield, 2011; Lippi-Green, 1997, 2012).

It has been posited that the notion of SE is less about the language used itself, and more about the speaker of that language (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Greenfield, 2011; Lawton & deKleine, 2020; Lippi-Green, 1997, 2012). Thus, antiBlackness again becomes an important consideration, as the notion of a standardized English which privileges white speakers is an ideology that inherently does harm to Black speakers and other students of color and

came about as a reaction to increased diversity in academia. It can be argued that SE is another way of policing and “spirit murdering” (Love, 2019) Black students in the American classroom. This is especially true when we consider the fact that even when Black AAE speakers use SE, they are still considered linguistically inferior (Alim & Smitherman, 2012; Flores & Rosa, 2015), as they are considered racially inferior overall (Baker-Bell, 2020b).

## **CRITICAL LANGUAGE AWARENESS IN THE CLASSROOM**

Recent scholarship has begun to reckon with these intersections of race, language, and power in the classroom and academia writ large. Baker-Bell et al. (2020) issued a demand for Black Linguistic Justice in 2020. Linguistic Justice, “an antiracist approach to language and literacy education ... about dismantling anti-Black linguistic racism and white linguistic hegemony and supremacy in the classroom” (Baker-Bell, 2020b, p. 7), has been posed as a way to rectify the racism accompanying SE in the classroom for students of color, particularly Black students. One way that researchers and teachers have attempted to answer the call for Linguistic Justice is through Critical Language Awareness (CLA) pedagogies, which critically analyze language use in respect to power and privilege (Alim, 2007; Godley & Minnici, 2008). CLA recognizes that language-use carries social meanings with material consequences and that these meanings are derived from social power, which changes constantly (Metz, 2022). CLA was originally posed by British researcher Norman Fairclough (1995), but Alim (2005) argued that this original framework is content with only educating about linguistic systems of power, oppression, racism, and antiBlackness without moving towards a change of those systems. American traditions of CLA are instead focused on moving beyond merely awareness of language oppression and systems of power into action towards linguistic justice. Thus, this article aligns with a specifically American tradition of CLA and is oriented towards disrupting antiBlack linguistic racism rather than merely educating about it. Further, the American context is unique in its history of antiBlackness, which informs American CLA. There are four main types of CLA pedagogies put forth in American scholarship: Critical Language Pedagogy (Godley & Minnici, 2008), Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy (Baker-Bell, 2020a), Critical Hip-Hop Language Pedagogy (Alim, 2007), and Critical Translanguaging Pedagogy (Seltzer, 2022). Across



these pedagogies, critiquing dominant language ideologies (Alim, 2007; Godley & Minnici, 2008) and valuing student contributions (Alim, 2007; Baker-Bell, 2020a; Godley & Minnici, 2008; Seltzer, 2022) are necessary for enacting CLA in the classroom. Race and racism are also important considerations in American CLA pedagogies (Alim, 2007; Baker-Bell, 2020a; Seltzer, 2022).

Godley and Minnici's (2008) Critical Language Pedagogy (CLP) addresses and problematizes dominant language ideologies (the belief that SE is the correct and appropriate English), relies on dialogism (making meaning through interactions), and builds on students' knowledge and their own dialects in and outside of school. Students are positioned as agents of social change, and the purpose of CLP is to allow students to begin to contest the idea of SE and pursue linguistic justice, something they cannot do without critical language teaching. While it encourages students to discuss and debate language use without there being a "correct" view on language or the policing of language use, CLP decentralizes race from its analysis of language and power the most (Baker-Bell, 2013). Baker-Bell's 2013 article built upon CLP to emphasize "the historical, cultural, and political underpinnings" of AAE (p. 358). In 2020, they further expanded this into its own pedagogy, antiracist Black language pedagogy (ABLP; Baker-Bell et al., 2020). ABLP has 10 framing ideas which include critically interrogating white linguistic hegemony and anti-Black linguistic racism, rejecting the idea that code-switching is empowering, and focusing on the needs and healing of Black students. It is heavily informed by AAE research. Baker-Bell et al.'s (2020) pedagogy is the most rooted in studying the intersections of race, language, and power, as examining antiBlackness specifically is key to the pedagogy.

Meanwhile, Critical Hip-Hop Language Pedagogy (CHHLP) first works to address the complex and conflicting language ideologies that undergird American society and schooling. It asks the key questions of "How can language be used to maintain, reinforce, and perpetuate existing power relations?" and "How can language be used to resist, redefine, and possibly reverse these relations?" (Alim, 2007, p. 166). It borrows the hip-hop phrase "real talk" as a means to generate metalanguage discourse in English classrooms. CHHLP generates metalanguage discourse in English classrooms

to address the complex and conflicting language ideologies that undergird American society and schooling. Learning about linguistic profiling is also central to CHHLP, and AAE is emphasized as a discriminated-against language. Race is centralized, and the notion of "talking white" is again deconstructed. Lastly, Seltzer (2022) explicated a critical translanguaging pedagogy (CTP), which aims to bring forth students' translanguaging, or the practice of naturally blending multiple languages to create a unique form of language use, something they argue also includes English dialects, such as blending AAE with SE. It does so by "centering students' engagement with multilingual and multimodal texts," as well as enabling students to analyze harmful, dominant language ideologies present in language and literacy practices (p. 3). Race is emphasized, and teacher content knowledge of raciolinguistics is necessary to engage with this pedagogy. Seltzer encouraged activities for the secondary English classroom like role-playing and linguistic studies in order to employ CTP.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What follows is a literature review exploring the ways English Language Arts (ELA) teachers in the U.S. currently and intentionally implement CLA pedagogies and the challenges teachers may encounter when doing so. I focus this literature review on CLA in ELA classrooms as it pertains to English dialects, especially AAE. I focus on ELA classrooms, as they are largely responsible for the literacy and language education students receive in the American school system. I offer an overview of the existing CLA pedagogies, what we know about them in practice, and how they are limited, so that ELA teachers may walk away with ideas to implement themselves and what to be aware of when trying out these ideas. For teachers hoping to disrupt antiBlack linguistic racism and pursue antiracist pedagogies in the classroom, I provide an overview of the theories and considerations needed to effectively and responsibly do so.

### Thus, the guiding research questions for this literature review are:

- What CLA pedagogies are U.S. secondary ELA teachers intentionally implementing in classrooms?;
- and What challenges do ELA teachers face when intentionally implementing CLA pedagogies?

## RACIOLINGUISTICS

This literature review is framed with a raciolinguistic lens in which race is considered as critically intersecting with language and power. Alim (2009) framed raciolinguistics as a way of understanding language and race, in which language is raced and race is languaged (Alim, 2009). This means that racialization is considered “a process of socialization in and through language” (Alim, 2019, p. 2). In other words, language is a cultural marker and creator of racial identities.

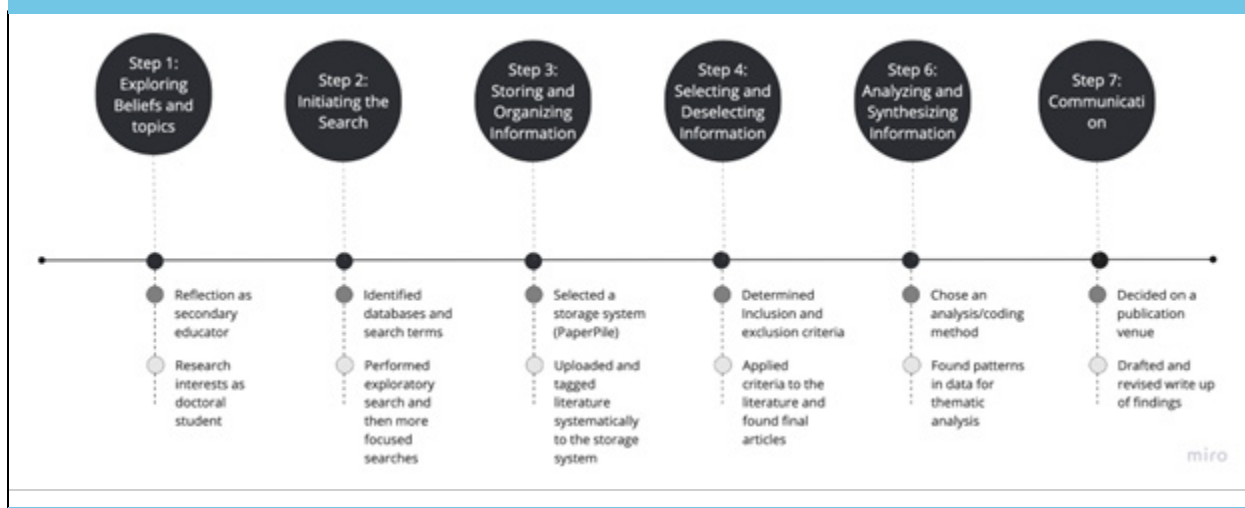
Expanding on Alim’s work, Rosa and Flores (2017) theorized that people “look like a language and sound like a race,” asserting that language is raced in the sense that someone’s racial identification can be inferred by/is linked to their language, and that the language someone uses is racially marked. Reaser et al., (2017) stated that although there is no single definition of SE, it is something “speakers of English know when they hear it.” Under a raciolinguistic lens, it could be argued that speakers of English know SE when they see it. This distinction is important, as it both helps make visible the racialization of SE, but also acknowledges that any language spoken by white people is privileged at the time of it being spoken (Rosa & Flores, 2017) and that even when racialized speakers use SE, they are still subject to violence, harassment, microaggressions, discrimination, and even death (Baker-Bell, 2020b).

Raciolinguistics, then, is a frame for understanding the systemic need for CLA pedagogies that view race, language, and power as interconnected, and how to implement them in an American educational system imbued with antiBlackness. This framework, as well as my identity, which will be discussed below, is foregrounded in my literature review and deeply informs my analysis.

## POSITIONALITY

I am a straight, lower-middle class, college-educated woman, and monolingual English speaker, all of which affect how I approach and understand the literature included in this review. As a white woman, my speech patterns and language use are commonly heard and seen as SE. This also means I am privileged to not experience antiBlack linguistic racism. However, my experiences as a secondary ELA teacher and teacher educator position me to witness it in action and, at times, to be complicit in perpetuating it. Through much education and unlearning of antiBlack ideologies, discourses, and practices, I have arrived at a place where I see the psychologically violent consequences on our students of color who speak racialized dialects when SE is reinforced as the only language appropriate for academic spaces. This literature review is part of my own unlearning process and attempt to disrupt rather than sustain status quo language education that does harm to our Black students and other students of color.

**FIGURE 1** — Phases of the Literature Review







## METHODS

### Onwuegbuzie & Frels's 7 Step Model

Designed to increase transparency and rigor in the research process, I applied an adapted version of Onwuegbuzie & Frels's (2016) seven-step model for contemporary systematic literature reviews. This model strives to be historically and culturally relevant, balancing "the intent of the original sources with the intent of the literature reviewer" (Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2016, p. 12). They argue that a culturally progressive literature reviewer is "intimately aware of [their] own cultural attributes better to recognize, to acknowledge, to affirm, and to value the worth of all participants and researchers/authors" (p. 13). As the impetus for this research is antiBlack linguistic racism, it is critical that I acknowledge my own identity and the way that it inevitably informs my analysis of the literature in this review. Further, it was essential to me that I employed a methodology that did not attempt to be objective and acknowledged the inherent subjectivity of the researcher on their research. Below is a visual of my research process, and what follows is a description of how I approached Onwuegbuzie & Frels's (2016) steps.

#### Step 1: Exploring Beliefs & Topics

I began this phase organically starting my journey as a doctoral student. As I read more and more literature, I drew connections to my experiences in the secondary ELA classroom. My readings shaped my work to be increasingly critical, and while learning about raciolinguistics, it clicked that the linguistic mismatch I was seeing in my classroom and school community was actually linguistic racism. From there, my research has focused on how instructors of English in the U.S. school system can work to dismantle white linguistic supremacy. CLA pedagogies are just one way that the literature is approaching this issue, but one that warrants further exploration.

#### Step 2: Initiating the Search

I used the databases Academic Search Ultimate and ERIC to complete this literature review. Multiple combinations of search terms were used, with each search including one term addressing CLA (i.e., "critical language," "critical language awareness," "critical language pedagogy," "critical linguistics," "raciolinguistics," "language ideology," and "linguistic ideology") and one term addressing secondary ELA classrooms (i.e., "English Language

Arts," "English classroom," "secondary English," "high school English," "middle school English," or "English teacher"). The Boolean operator AND was used with each pair of CLA and ELA terms. CLA terms were placed in quotations to keep the whole phrase together, whereas ELA terms were not. As I was looking for explicit and intentional practicing of CLA pedagogies, using the whole phrase allowed for a narrowed focus on explicit CLA pedagogies rather than broader critical pedagogies (e.g., critical literacy).

Most combinations generated between 5-60 initial results. For example, "critical language awareness" AND secondary English generated 29 results (one of which was included here: Metz, 2021a). "Raciolinguistics" AND secondary English generated 33 results (three of which were included in this review: Daniels, 2018; Seltzer, 2019b; Seltzer & de los Ríos, 2018). "Raciolinguistics" AND English teacher generated 60 results (the same three as "Raciolinguistics" and secondary English). "Critical Language Pedagogy" AND English teacher generated five results (three were included: Alim, 2007; Baker-Bell, 2013; Dyches Bissonnette et al., 2016). "Critical language awareness" AND English language arts yielded 31 results (four were included in this review: Godley et al., 2015; Metz, 2018; Metz, 2021a; Metz, 2021b). I also used backwards citation methods from database articles to find additional literature.

#### Step 3: Storing and Organizing Information

Using PaperPile, I created an online collection of articles I found using the search terms. Abstracts of the articles were collected using this software, and I used folders and subfolders to organize the articles by context (i.e., whether they were focused on pre-service educators, in-service educators, students' perspectives, or teachers' perspectives).

#### Step 4: Selecting and Deselecting Materials

I excluded book chapters and dissertations, as this literature review focused on peer-reviewed empirical and theoretical research. Articles were also excluded if they did not occur in a secondary general education ELA classroom (6th-12th grade) or in a pre-service ELA teacher education program in the United States. Lastly, I excluded articles that dealt explicitly with English as a second language or focused on bilingualism with non-English languages, as I was interested in how teachers implemented CLA pedagogies with students whose language

practices and dialects of English are racialized and oppressed. These exclusion rules left 25 articles, to which a set of inclusion criteria was applied. Included articles looked specifically at intentional teacher actions, including pre-service English teachers' learning about CLA. Articles also had to define critical language pedagogies explicitly through language and power. Lastly, articles needed to be in the U.S. context, as I was focused on speakers of uniquely American dialects of English. In total, this literature review included 17 articles. I did not complete Phase 5 (expanding the search through media, observations, documents, experts, and secondary sources) because of my exclusion criteria of non-peer-reviewed sources.

### **Step 6: Analyzing and Synthesizing the Information**

I created an annotated bibliography and several charts comparing the articles side by side. Using these materials, I analyzed the 17 articles for patterns, which were then used to determine major themes across the literature to answer my research questions. I offer this resulting article as Step 7, Presenting the comprehensive literature review written report.

### **Methodological Considerations**

Alexander's (2020) commentary on challenges for systematic literature reviews also informed the way I approached this article. First, Alexander (2020) discussed the need for "finding a 'critical question

worthy of review'" that is both unanswered but answerable (p. 7). Thus, in step 1, I was careful to situate this review theoretically and connected my topic (CLA in secondary ELA classrooms) with a significant problem (antiBlack linguistic racism). Procedurally and in this written report, I followed Alexander's (2020) guidance to provide a clear and specific corpus of my search terms with justifiable inclusion and exclusion criteria that both looked at the quality of sources and their relevancy to my research questions. Finally, I followed the consolidating and summarizing challenges guidance to craft a chart demonstrating relevant, basic characteristics of the selected literature included in this review.

### **Characteristics of the Literature**

There are four major categories of articles included in this qualitative systematic literature review: theoretical conceptualizations of CLA pedagogies based on empirical research (four articles); empirical research with pre-service ELA teachers (three articles); empirical research with in-service ELA teachers (two articles); and empirical research with both in-service ELA teachers and their students as participants (nine articles). Across these 17 articles, ten in-service secondary English teachers and their classrooms were studied. Many of these teachers participated in multiple studies with the authors. See Table 1 for information.



**TABLE 1** — Article Details

RESEARCH WITH PRE-SERVICE ELA TEACHERS			
Article	Participants	Summary	Methods
Dyches-Bissonnette, et. al. (2016)	Pre-service teachers at 3 universities in South and Midwest (81-100% white)	Implemented a CLA in ELA teaching unit, found that teachers with less exposure to language diversity in their communities relied on more “white educational discourse.”	Qualitative deductive analysis of 7 online discussion topics (446 posts total).
Godley, et. al. (2015)	24 white Midwest pre-service teachers	Implemented a CLA in ELA teaching unit, found how these teachers understood language diversity and discrimination, but employed “white educational discourse” to avoid talking about race.	Qualitative coding and analysis of 11 online discussion topics (376 posts total).
Metz (2022)	20 middle/high school ELA teachers across 10 Mid-west states	Implemented CLA unit in teacher education program, found that teachers developed their own understanding for students through everyday video analysis and were more willing to engage in CLA through texts.	Qualitative coding and analysis of 1 discussion post (48 pages of content).
RESEARCH WITH IN-SERVICE ELA TEACHERS			
Article	Participants	Summary	Methods
Daniels (2018)	4 white Humanities teachers in CA	Worked with teachers attempting to implement CLA-oriented pedagogies, found contradictions on code-switching amongst white teachers.	Participant action research with teachers.

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## RESEARCH WITH IN-SERVICE ELA TEACHERS

Article	Participants	Summary	Methods
Metz (2021a)	3 ELA teachers in CA: Mr. Lane (Black), Mr. Mathers (white), Ms. Saito (Asian-American)	Studied the way that ELA teachers communicated language ideologies through implemented CLA units, found that teachers model academic linguistic stying in ways that reinforce dominant language ideologies.	Used Dialect Density Measure, and conducted discourse analysis of observations of teachers as well as interviews with teachers and students.

## RESEARCH WITH IN-SERVICE ELA TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

Article	Participants	Summary	Methods
Baker-Bell (2013)	Ms. Dixon, Black ELA teacher in MI	Implemented a week long unit on AAE as part of a language and identity unit, and found that students felt more positively towards AAE and their own language.	Interviews with the teacher, analysis of students' written work, and transcribed observations of implemented curriculum.
Chisholm & Godley (2011)	Mrs. Allen, white ELA teacher in midwest	Implemented a 3 day unit on CLA focused on small group inquiry based discussions; found that such discussions can facilitate student language learning and problem posing.	Classroom observation (recording and field notes) and interviews with student participants.
Godley & Loretto (2013)	Mrs. Allen, white ELA teacher in midwest	Implemented an improved 3 day unit on CLA, and found that students already had linguistic counter-narratives.	Critical cultural discourse analysis of recorded observations and field notes.
Godley & Minnici (2008)	Mrs. West, white ELA teacher in midwest	Implemented a week long unit on language variation and found that students had conflicting language ideologies as well as teachers.	Classroom observation (recording and field notes), student reflections, student questionnaire, and student interviews.



Continued ...

**RESEARCH WITH IN-SERVICE ELA TEACHERS AND STUDENTS**

Article	Participants	Summary	Methods
Metz (2021b)	Ms. Kayle, white ELA teacher in CA	Implemented CLA lessons in a literature unit; found that teachers with high knowledge of linguistic principles but who ignored student knowledge undermined learning.	Collected student work, student surveys, and curricula materials as well as interviews with teachers and students.
Metz (2018)	5 ELA teachers in CA: Ms. Kayle (white), Mr. Lane (Black), Mr. Mathers (white), Ms. Batar (Asian-American); Ms. Saito (Asian-American)	Implemented CLA lessons in a literature unit; found that teachers fell back on dominant, standardized language ideologies in the rare times they did speak about language despite wanting to be critical in their approach.	Pre- and post-interviews with teachers, as well as video recorded observations (56 hours).
Seltzer (2019a)	Ms. Winter, white ELA teacher in NY	Implemented year long unit on language and race, and found student meta-commentary served as a linguistic counternarrative.	Recorded observations, interviews, and student handouts/work were collected.
Seltzer (2019b)	Ms. Winter, white ELA teacher in NY	Implemented year long unit on language and race focused on student role playing activities; found that these activities allowed students to translanguage.	Discourse analysis of collected emails, social media, classroom journals, and observed comments and questions from students.

Across the surveyed literature, many CLA informed pedagogies were being implemented exclusively in urban classrooms with almost entirely Black and Brown students. Three of these classrooms had 100% Black student populations (Baker-Bell, 2013; Chisholm & Godley, 2011; Godley & Loretto, 2013; Godley & Minnici, 2008), and the other seven classrooms had majority Hispanic student populations (Metz, 2018, 2021a, 2021b; Seltzer, 2018, 2019a, 2019b; Seltzer & de los Ríos, 2018). Across

studies, white students made up less than 3% of classroom population. Further, out of the ten in-service teachers participating in these studies, five identified as white. It is also important to note that three of the ten classrooms were specifically ethnic literature courses (African-American and LatinX studies).

RESULTS

CLA Pedagogies

CLA itself is an orientation, not a pedagogy, and is often criticized as overly theoretical (Alim, 2007). However, scholars have developed various pedagogies through which teachers can enact CLA in the classroom. Table 2 maps the use of the four main CLA pedagogies across this literature review, as well as a brief summary of how they were implemented.

TABLE 2 – Conceptualization of CLA Informed Pedagogies		
THEORETICAL CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF CLA INFORMED PEDAGOGIES		
Theorist	Pedagogy	Empirical Studies employing the pedagogy
Godley & Minnici (2008)	Critical Language Pedagogy	Baker-Bell (2013); Chisholm & Godley (2011); Metz (2018; 2021b); Godley & Minnici (2008); Godley & Loretto (2013)
Baker-Bell (2020a)	Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy	-
Alim (2007)	Critical Hip Hop Language Pedagogy	Alim (2007)
Seltzer (2022)	Critical Translanguaging Pedagogy	Seltzer (2019a; 2019b); Seltzer & de los Ríos (2018)

CRITICAL LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY

Critical language pedagogy, the most commonly implemented CLA pedagogy, was implemented in several ways in the scholarly literature. In their article introducing CLP, Godley and Minnici (2008) worked with bidialectal (fluent in both AAE and SE) 10th grade students and their teacher during a *To Kill a Mockingbird* follow-up unit on language variation and dialects in grammar. The unit focused on viewing language diversity as an asset and understanding the way language is used for different purposes and audiences. Dialect awareness activities and contrastive analysis, or the comparison of dialects, were used. In another example of CLP, Chrisholm and Godley (2011) focused on inquiry-based and problem-posing instruction within grammar and language courses at a high school. They worked with teachers of 9-11 grade students, and small group discussions were the main mode of learning. Learning was also rooted in students’ own experiences with language use. Meanwhile, Godley and Loretto (2013) used counternarratives that rejected the idea of a linguistic hierarchy as

part of their 11th grade unit, in which students dissected the notions of “talking white” and “talking Black.” Race and racism were emphasized in this implementation of CLP. Similarly, when Baker-Bell (2013) employed CLP, she attempted to bring race into the conversation by focusing her CLA unit on AAE. Baker-Bell worked with an 11th grade ELA teacher to create a week-long unit with the goals of understanding the complex nature of language systems, recognizing linguistic privilege and how identity shapes language, and then applying this knowledge to text.

Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy

At the time this article was written, there was no empirical research published in peer-reviewed journals that employed this pedagogy. However, Baker-Bell did release a book in 2020 entitled *Linguistic Justice*, in which ABLP was studied in an urban high school classroom.

Critical Hip-Hop Language Pedagogy

Alim (2007) theorized CHHLP after a 2003 study in an urban California high school. In his study, Alim

leveraged hip-hop for contrastive analysis and sociolinguistic ethnographic research by students. It was also heavily informed by student interests.

### **Critical Translanguaging Pedagogy**

Seltzer developed her conceptualization of CTP throughout several studies. In 2018, Seltzer and de Los Ríos undertook a study with an 11th grade teacher during a yearlong curriculum looking at intersections of race and language in students' lives. The teacher was able to both prepare students for end-of-year exams and critique the fact that these exams were rooted in the idea of SE. The co-author of this piece, de los Ríos, studied a teacher who practiced translanguaging themselves and imbued it throughout their lessons rather than explicitly teaching it. Because the teacher's course was taught with a raciolinguistic lens, the teacher was able to make curricular links to students' languaging, cultural practices, and racialization. In their 2019 studies, Seltzer (2019a, 2019b) again reported on the yearlong unit, where students encountered key linguistic vocabulary and theory, read about language use, explored how language shaped their own identities and lives, and analyzed mock college essays that leveraged translanguaging.

### **Implementation Challenges**

As the studies included in this literature review focused on intentional examples of CLA pedagogies in secondary ELA classrooms as well as with pre-service ELA teachers, the teachers included here all wished to address intersections of language, race, and power. Yet, across the literature, teachers struggled to implement CLA pedagogies. Eight out of the 17 articles directly addressed these challenges (Alim, 2007; Baker-Bell, 2013; Daniels, 2018; Godley, et al., 2015; Godley & Minnici, 2008; Metz, 2018; Metz, 2021b; Seltzer, 2022). Only four studies focused on the success of implementing CLA pedagogy alone (Chisholm & Godley, 2011; Godley & Loretto, 2013; Seltzer, 2021a, 2021b).

One challenge was that teachers did not feel as if they had enough CLA knowledge to create CLA curriculum or to teach language critically in general (Baker-Bell, 2013; Godley & Minnici, 2008). Out of the ten classrooms examined in this article, five teachers relied on researchers to develop the curriculum used for implementing CLA (Baker-Bell, 2013; Chisholm & Godley, 2011; Godley & Loretto, 2013; Godley & Minnici, 2008; Seltzer, 2019a, Seltzer, 2019b; Seltzer & de los Ríos, 2018). Out of these five teachers,

two relied on the researchers to teach the units on CLA, as they did not feel they had the knowledge necessary to implement the curriculum (Baker-Bell, 2013; Godley & Minnici, 2008). It is also important to note that in three of the five classrooms, CLA pedagogies were implemented only in a 3–5-day mini unit outside the standard curriculum (Baker-Bell, 2013; Chisholm & Godley, 2013; Godley & Loretto, 2013; Godley & Minnici, 2008).


For teachers who did not rely on researcher support, it is questionable how much CLA pedagogy was used in those classrooms. Metz (2018) found that only an average of 7% of class time throughout a multi-week unit was classified as implementing CLA pedagogies across five classrooms.

Implementation of CLA pedagogies is rare and difficult in the first place, and when it is implemented teachers often struggle with contradictions between “their own ideological positions, training, lived experiences, and sometimes overwhelmingly antidemocratic school cultures and practices” (Alim, 2007, p. 173). In fact, contradicting ideologies held by the implementing teachers regarding CLA was a recurring challenge (Alim, 2007; Daniels, 2018; Dyches Bissonnette et al., 2016; Godley & Minnici, 2008; Seltzer & de los Ríos, 2018). Godley et al. (2015) argued that developing CLA and critical language ideologies were not the same as teaching with critical language pedagogies, and that contradictions between beliefs and actions complicate the process. It is important to consider teachers' ideologies, because language pedagogies are ideological by nature, with schools acting as the “primary site of language ideological combat” (Alim, 2007, p. 163). Further, educators' own beliefs about language inform the way that they teach language (Alim, 2007; Godley & Minnici, 2008; Metz, 2018, 2021a).

Metz's 2018 study of five secondary English teachers in San Francisco specifically examined contradictions in language ideologies. In particular, Metz found that teachers fell back on dominant language ideologies during their language teaching, despite their commitment to critical language pedagogies. Most teachers ranged from using dominant language ideology 8.6–60% of the time that they taught about language (Metz, 2018).

### **Race Evasiveness**

One specific contradiction between belief and action in implementing CLA pedagogies that was common across the teachers was race evasiveness. This



body of literature suggests that CLA pedagogies necessitate critically examining race at the intersection of language and power; however, it also shows educators may attempt to enact CLA pedagogies that evade race-related discourse. Thus, it is evident throughout the included studies that those who are committed to critical language pedagogies still reinforce white language norms when they do not interrogate their own whiteness<sup>1</sup> nor examine the racialized nature of dominant language ideology (Alim, 2007; Baker-Bell, 2013; Baker-Bell, 2020b; Daniels, 2018; Dyches Bissonnette et al., 2016; Godley et al., 2015; Metz, 2018, 2021b; Seltzer, 2019a, 2019b; Seltzer & de los Ríos, 2018).

Daniels (2018), Dyches Bissonnette et al. (2016), and Godley et al. (2015) each studied the ways that whiteness, in particular, limited CLA pedagogies. For example, Godley and colleagues (2015) found that a class of 24 white pre-service English teachers in the Midwest were committed to celebrating language diversity in the classroom but were resistant to addressing white privilege and systems of power, such as antiBlack linguistic racism. Pre-service teachers employed white Educational Discourse strategies, such as using color-blind language to describe racialized dialects, falling back on authority, and overgeneralizing the experiences of racial minorities (Haviland, 2008). Because of this, Godley et al. (2015) argued that teachers must “understand and acknowledge Whiteness and SE as non-neutral” in order to develop a CLA orientation (p. 43).

Further, additional studies found that teachers named the racialized dialect AAE, but did not engage with discussions about the racialization of AAE speakers when students questioned labeling the dialect as African-American (Dyches Bissonnette et al., 2016; Godley & Minnici, 2008; Metz, 2021a; Seltzer, 2019a). This demonstrates that even when race was inevitably brought into the classroom during critical language teaching, teachers remained hesitant to actively address race.

### **Discounting Student Knowledge**

All CLA pedagogies discussed in this review emphasized valuing student knowledge (Alim, 2007; Baker-Bell, 2020b; Godley & Minnici, 2008; Seltzer, 2022). However, the literature revealed that in actual practice, students’ pre-existing knowledge was usually discounted, especially in favor of scholarly definitions of code-switching, AAE, and SE (Godley

& Minnici, 2008; Metz, 2021b; Seltzer, 2019a).

Research shows that students bring with them an already developed understanding of raciolinguistics and CLA, but lack the vocabulary to articulate those understandings (Alim, 2007; Baker-Bell, 2013; Baker-Bell, 2020b; Chisholm & Godley, 2011; Godley & Loretto, 2013; Godley & Minnici, 2008; Metz, 2021b; Seltzer, 2019a, 2019b; Seltzer & de los Ríos, 2018). For example, students may recognize the contradictory views teachers hold, because many teachers themselves do not use the SE they expect from students (Godley & Minnici, 2008). Some studies suggested that students’ CLA awareness is more developed than that of teachers, because many teachers are socialized into an idea of academic language and their role as enforcers of SE (Alim, 2007; Dyches Bissonnette et al., 2016; Metz, 2018, 2021a; Seltzer, 2022).

Additionally, because students are already gifted linguists who manipulate language daily themselves (Alim, 2007), the literature indicates that not allowing students to operate as linguistic experts can create a divide between teachers and students (Alim, 2007; Daniels, 2018; Metz, 2018, 2021b; Seltzer, 2019a, 2022; Seltzer & de los Ríos, 2018), resulting in students who are resistant to CLA pedagogies (Alim, 2007; Metz, 2021b; Seltzer, 2019a; Seltzer & de los Ríos, 2018).

Seltzer (2019a) demonstrated the importance of privileging student knowledge over scholarly knowledge through students’ reflections on the controversial practice of code-switching. The literature is divided on the theoretical value of code-switching, with scholars such as Baker-Bell (2013, 2020b) and Daniels (2018) asserting that it is harmful to students who speak AAE, and others maintaining that it is necessary for students (e.g., Godley & Minnici, 2008). Seltzer (2019a) suggested that CLA pedagogies should engage students in critiquing practices like code-switching while also allowing students to make their own decisions about language use. Students in their study had nuanced perspectives. Some students reported code-switching to protect their real identity from strangers, others felt pride in their ability to code-switch, and others felt that code-switching even allowed them to subvert the linguistic hierarchy from within (Seltzer, 2019a). Students who embraced code-switching in this study still approached

<sup>1</sup> Whiteness refers to the way white ways of being and white culture operate as the standard against which all others are compared (Smithsonian).



language critically and were empowered to make their own conscious decisions about language use. Thus, it is important that teachers, especially white teachers, are hesitant to condemn practices like code-switching or to name students' languages for them (Daniels, 2018; Seltzer, 2019a; Seltzer & de los Ríos, 2018) when it is directly de-valuing the linguistic knowledge of students.

## DISCUSSION

### Addressing Challenges

Within the literature, a call for changes to teacher education to promote CLA was almost universal (Alim, 2007; Baker-Bell, 2013, 2020b; Dyches Bissonnette et al., 2016; Metz, 2018, 2021a, 2021b, 2022; Seltzer, 2019a, 2022; Seltzer & de los Ríos 2018). Specifically, Alim (2007), Baker-Bell (2013, 2020b), Dyches Bissonnette et al. (2016), Godley et al. (2015), Metz (2021b, 2022), Seltzer (2022), and Seltzer & de los Ríos (2018) called for teachers to develop their linguistic knowledge, including becoming conversant<sup>2</sup> in AAE, to implement CLA pedagogies in their classrooms.

One strategy put forth in the literature was to prepare teachers with Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) for CLA. Dyches Bissonnette (2016), Godley et al. (2015), and Metz (2021b) stated that PCK might help bridge the gap between CLA theory and critical language teaching. PCK focuses on teacher knowledge of content, students, and pedagogy. Metz's (2018) conception of PCK for CLA requires knowledge of linguistic content,

valuing of student knowledge, and knowledge of Godley and Minnici's (2008) critical language pedagogy. The goal of this framework is to support teachers in replacing traditional notions of language corrections. It emphasizes that critical language teaching is unique from any other subject because students are already experts in their own language use (Metz, 2021b). Providing pre-service English teachers with PCK for CLA can build a foundation for implementing CLA pedagogies in the classroom (Dyches Bissonnette, 2016; Godley et al., 2015; Metz, 2021b).

This literature review showed that even teachers whose teacher education programs or professional development trained them in CLA pedagogies lacked confidence in their CLA knowledge, given that they relied heavily on researchers to implement those pedagogies (Baker-Bell, 2013; Chisholm &


Godley, 2013; Godley & Loretto, 2013; Godley & Minnici, 2008; Seltzer, 2019a, Seltzer, 2019b; Seltzer & de los Ríos, 2018). Further, teachers often evaded the topic of race (Alim, 2007; Baker-Bell, 2013, 2020b; Daniels, 2018; Dyches Bissonnette et al., 2016; Godley et al., 2015; Metz, 2018, 2021b; Seltzer, 2019a, 2019b; Seltzer & de los Ríos, 2018) and/or discounted student knowledge (Godley & Minnici, 2008; Metz, 2021b; Seltzer, 2019a), violating two central components of critical language teaching and CLA pedagogies (Alim, 2007; Baker-Bell, 2020b; Godley & Minnici, 2008; Seltzer, 2022). This suggests that teacher education programs and professional development need to provide teachers not only with linguistic knowledge regarding CLA, but must also work to disrupt the contradicting language ideologies that teachers may hold. Two possible strategies for addressing these contradicting language ideologies through teacher education programs and professional development are developing the racial literacy of teachers and recognizing students as expert and skilled sociolinguists in the classroom.

### RACIAL LITERACY

As evident by the race evasiveness demonstrated by the teachers in this literature review, it is imperative that teachers have enough fluency with discussing race and racism to lead students in interrogating systems of racial power and privilege through language. Teachers need to understand their own language ideologies and their own internalized whiteness to be able to teach CLA through a raciolinguistic lens to students. The ability to discuss race and racism is commonly referred to as racial literacy (Rogers & Mosley, 2008). Teacher education programs offer a space in which teachers can gain practice engaging in racial discourse and foster their knowledge of racial literacy before entering the classroom (Clark, et al., 2022; Kerkhoff & Falter, 2021; Sealey-Ruiz, 2023, 2023). Racial literacy can be developed in teacher education programs and professional development through book clubs (Clark et al., 2022; Rogers & Mosley, 2008), multimedia discussion boards (Kerkhoff & Falter, 2021), analysis of one's own educational experiences (Rolón-Dow et al., 2021), viewing documentaries (Segall & Garrett, 2013), and it can even be embedded in the curriculum itself (Szpara, 2006). Racial literacy in regard to CLA can be fostered through linguistic counternarratives that work against antiBlack

<sup>2</sup> This is not to say that teachers should begin using AAE, but should rather be well-versed in understanding it.





dominant language ideologies. An example of a linguistic counternarrative would be representing SE as a racialized dialect of English rather than simply as the standard, correct, and appropriate English (Metz, 2018).

Racial literacy, which helps facilitate CLA, is an important component of critically teaching language in the secondary English classroom, especially for those who work with predominantly white students. If we understand dominant language ideology to be racialized, the demographics of participants (see Table 1) in this literature review indicate that the dominant group (white students) are not being educated on language varieties or interrogating language, race, and power. Although the studies here found that students already had strong CLA understandings, these students were almost entirely speakers of racially marginalized languages such as AAE. Considering that white teachers make up the majority of the teaching force (National Center for Education Studies, 2020), many teachers are unlikely to have experience with antiBlack linguistic racism. Indeed, the white teachers in these studies indicated only emerging CLA and raciolinguistic ideologies (Baker-Bell, 2013; Chisholm & Godley, 2013; Godley & Loretto, 2013; Godley & Minnici, 2008; Metz, 2021b, 2022; Seltzer, 2019a, 2019b; Seltzer & de los Ríos, 2018). White students are also unlikely to have strong CLA understandings without being explicitly taught. Teaching white students to see the relationship between language, race, and power can disrupt the status quo, because language users who do not experience antiBlack linguistic racism can reduce socialization into dominant language ideology and further harm students of color.

### **Students as Sociolinguistics**

Ceding linguistic expertise to students can also serve as a counternarrative, which allows teachers and students alike to work through contradicting linguistic ideologies. Students bring their own experiences of language and their own ideologies to the classroom, and these experiences may be different from teachers' CLA. For example, many students across the literature rejected the notion that AAE was an exclusively Black language (Dyches Bissonnette et al., 2016; Godley & Minnici, 2008; Metz, 2021b; Seltzer, 2019a). By centering students' understandings and definitions of linguistic terms rather than discounting them, teachers can leverage such knowledge to critically examine

the contradicting language ideologies inherent even in language labels. The literature provided multiple examples of units, lessons, and activities for teachers to implement CLA pedagogies in secondary English classrooms (Alim, 2007; Baker-Bell, 2013; Metz, 2022; Seltzer, 2022). However, teachers should be cautious before implementing these pedagogies exactly. In line with the emphasis CLA pedagogies place on student linguistic knowledge, Alim (2007), Baker-Bell (2013), Seltzer (2022), and Seltzer & de los Ríos (2018) warned that teachers should adjust to the linguistic diversity and needs of their own classroom, as well as the knowledge their own students hold. Implementing these units, lessons, and activities should be adjusted for each unique individual classroom rather than strictly adhered to.

### **Limitations**

This review included only empirical articles that explicitly addressed and intentionally implemented critical language pedagogies. It is very likely that some teachers outside of this review are employing critical language pedagogies without the awareness of doing so. There may be more ways that teachers are implementing CLA pedagogies that are not captured by the four pedagogies included here. Additionally, this review was limited only to secondary ELA classrooms. As classrooms across different subject areas have students who are racially and linguistically diverse, all teachers encounter non-standardized English speaking and language minority students and can implement CLA informed pedagogies. CLA pedagogies extend beyond the ELA classroom as language can be critically interrogated in any form of language use. Important work on college composition courses and CLA is also being done (e.g. Hankerson, 2023; Shapiro, 2022) that was not included here. Another limitation is that insights regarding CLA pedagogies could be gleaned from literature on multilingual students or multidialectal students of world Englishes.

### **Future Directions**

As evident by the relatively small base of literature, the field of critical language pedagogies is still emerging. Few empirical studies exist on CLA pedagogies in secondary ELA contexts, and the existing literature is further limited by the homogenous demographics of current studies. However, scholarship is rapidly expanding in this field

of study, making the literature captured here only a snapshot of the early research on CLA pedagogies in the secondary ELA classroom. Some areas for potential future research include further analyses of the CLA pedagogies of teachers of color (e.g. Fu et Al., 2023), building practical knowledge in CLA-informed grammar instruction (e.g., Metz, 2023), and exploration into the potential of translanguaging as a CLA pedagogy (e.g., Seltzer and de los Rios, 2023). More research on CLA pedagogies is needed to better understand the effects of CLA pedagogy on student learning and their “spirits.” ●



## CONCLUSION

**Through this literature review, several key findings emerged:**

1. Critical Language Pedagogy (Godley & Minnici, 2008) is the most commonly implemented form of CLA pedagogy in American secondary ELA classrooms;
2. Despite the emphasis on examination of race as a critical component of CLA pedagogies, most ELA teachers were race evasive in the way they implemented these pedagogies; and
3. Many ELA teachers discounted students' linguistic knowledge, which limited the effectiveness of these pedagogies.

These findings make it evident that for secondary ELA teachers to work towards dismantling linguistic racism in the secondary ELA context, particularly anti-Black linguistic racism, they must develop their own racial literacy to address issues of race and power with students in the classroom. There is also a need to develop comfort in seeing students as linguistic experts, or as sociolinguists, in the classroom and relying on their own knowledge and experience to guide critical language education. By doing so, teachers can work to mitigate the cultural and linguistic mismatch between racialized students and the majority white teaching force as well as the psychological harm that this mismatch causes, hopefully dismantle standard language ideology in their classroom. ●



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