

Critical Hip-Hop Language Pedagogies: Combat, Consciousness, and the Cultural Politics of Communication

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This article addresses two long-standing tensions in the education of linguistically marginalized youth: (a) the cultural tension, or cultural combat, that such students engage in as they form their linguistic identities, and (b) the tensions between the development of critical language pedagogies and the lack of their broader implementation due to disinterested and discriminatory teachers. This article presents critical Hip-hop language pedagogies (CHHLPs) as a holistic approach aimed at both students *and* teachers, incorporating theory *and* practice, so that innovative approaches might be implemented. After situating CHHLPs within critical language studies, the article argues that educators are obligated to present the current sociolinguistic reality to students who are subjugated in mainstream institutions. To this end, several pedagogical approaches are presented and discussed. The article concludes with a vision for critical, reflexive pedagogies and a call to mobilize the full body of language, social, and cultural theory to produce consciousness-raising pedagogies.

Key words: critical language studies, critical pedagogies, hip-hop pedagogies, politics of language, language ideologies, hip-hop culture

- Latasha (L): Yeah, like the way I talk to my teacher ain't the same way I talk with the 3L Clique.
- Alim (A): 3L Clique? What's that?
- L: All of our names begin with "L," so we named our click after that, the 3L Clique. It's me, LaToya, and Lamar. . . .
- A: And how is the way y'all talk different from the way you talk to the teacher?

- L: Well, it's like, you know that rapper, Nelly?
 A: Yeah, yeah.
 L: How he say everything like "urrrr," like for "here" he'll be like "hurrrr"?
 A: Yeah! [Laughing] "I ain't from 'round hurrrr!"
 L: [Laughing] That's how we try to talk!
 A: Why, though?!
 L: Cuz we like it!

—Author's 2003 conversation with a student at Haven High
 in Sunnyside, USA

I mean, I think the thing that teachers work with, or *combat* the most at Haven High, is definitely like issues with standard English versus vernacular English.

—Teacher at Haven High in Sunnyside, USA, in 2003

The cultural politics of communication leaves many speakers of nondominant languages in a “cultural catch-22.” For example, just as economic institutions are gentrifying and removing Black communities around the nation and offering unfulfilled promises of economic independence, one can also say that educational institutions have been attempting (since integration) to gentrify and remove Black Language (BL) from its speakers with similarly unfulfilled promises of economic mobility. In both cases the message is, “Economic opportunities will be opened up to you if you just let us clean up your neighborhoods and your language.” Most Blacks in the United States since integration can testify that they have experienced teachers’ attempts to eradicate their language and linguistic practices (Alim & Baugh, 2007 see Morgan, 2002, on “outing schools”) in favor of the adoption of White cultural and linguistic norms. Many U.S. Blacks can also testify that their desire for group solidarity and identification—as well as linguistic creativity (as with the 3L Clique above)—has rendered this coercive process of cultural and linguistic norming all but irrelevant.

In this article, I address two long-standing tensions in the language education of linguistically profiled and marginalized youth. The first is the cultural tension, or cultural combat, that such students engage in on a daily basis as they form their linguistic identities in creative and often unexpected (by teachers) ways (see two opening quotations). And the second is between the development of critical language pedagogies and the lack of their broader implementation due to disinterested, and yes, sometimes discriminatory teachers and school systems. I present critical hip-hop language pedagogies (CHHLPs) as a holistic approach aimed at both students *and* teachers, incorporating theory *and* practice, so that innovative approaches might begin to be implemented in classrooms as part of a broader educational movement advocating locally relevant and continually negotiated curricula. I begin broadly by locating the school as a primary site of

language ideological combat, and situating CHHLPs within the frame of critical language awareness. I argue that linguists and educators are obligated to present the current social and linguistic reality to students who are economically, politically, and culturally subjugated in mainstream institutions. To this end, several pedagogical approaches will be presented and discussed, including the “Real Talk” project, “Language in My Life” project, “Hiphopography: The Ethnography of Hip Hop Culture and Communication,” and “Linguistic Profiling in the Classroom,” in an effort to develop CHHLPs. I conclude with a vision for critical, reflexive language pedagogies and a call to mobilize the full body of language, social, and cultural theory to produce consciousness-raising pedagogies.

SITUATING CRITICAL HIP-HOP LANGUAGE PEDAGOGIES

CHHLPs engage the research in the field of language ideologies brought into focus by Schieffelin, Woolard, and Kroskrity (1998) and Kroskrity (2000). I refer to *language ideologies* in the broadest sense as “the shared bodies of commonsense notions about the nature of language in the world” (Rumsey, 1990, p. 346, as cited in Schieffelin et al., 1998, p. 4). Those who have conducted long-term research in schools are well aware that teachers’ language ideologies are remarkably consistent in their elevation of the “standard” language variety and their devaluation of all other varieties (Alim, 2004a, 2004b). In fact, one could argue that most members of any society (even linguists are not immune) have purchased and are deeply, if unconsciously, invested in the hegemony of the “standard” language (DeBose, 2007). Teachers are the shared focus of CHHLPs because they are the ones charged with the awesome responsibility of educating culturally and linguistically diverse students. They hold the same deeply entrenched set of folk linguistic mythologies and ideologies of language as most citizens, yet they are required to enforce “rules” that reproduce the current sociolinguistic order in a very direct way through language teaching, thus placing them in a tremendous position of power.

The teacher, by virtue of the education system’s dialectical relationship to the labor market, is a primary conduit of the cultural reproduction of prescriptive and sometimes prejudicial language ideologies (Bourdieu, 1991). Bourdieu’s theorizing articulates language education in much broader terms than the mere acquisition of a “standard variety”—in fact, it places language education as central to the construction of a common national consciousness. Many teachers still view their role to be one in which they “work daily on the faculty of expression to build the common consciousness of the nation” (pp. 48). The establishment of that “same clear, fixed language” (p. 49) to speakers of diverse linguistic varieties is, as one teacher put it, “the thing that teachers . . . combat

the most.” It is an unfortunate reality that the primary “thing that teachers combat the most” could very well be the thing that they are least prepared to understand.

In this context, CHHLPs view the school as a primary site of language ideological combat, and begin with efforts to uncover and understand the complex and conflicting language ideologies within particular educational institutions. The school is a key site for the construction, legitimation, and imposition of an “official language.” One of the goals of CHHLPs is to uncover both the official, articulated language ideologies of the school, and the unofficial, unarticulated language ideologies of teachers and students. From the two opening quotations in this article, we can already get a sense of how these ideologies may be at odds. Whereas teachers consistently engage in behaviors that aim to produce a homogenous “academic language,” many students are busy celebrating, highlighting, and consciously manipulating diverse language varieties.

This 2003 dialogue with a teacher from Haven High in Sunnyside, a diverse, working-class suburb in the United States, serves as the entry point to our discussion of how BL (and its speakers) are viewed in American educational institutions. We enter the dialogue as the teacher describes the “communication” goals of the school, and the language and communication behavior of her Black students:

Teacher (T): They [Haven High] have a lot of presentation standards, so like this list of, you know, what you *should* be doing when you’re having like an oral presentation—like you should speak slowly, speak loudly, speak clearly, make eye contact, use body language, those kinds of things, and it’s all written out into a rubric, so when the kids have a presentation, you grade on each element. And so, I mean, in that sense, they’ve worked with developing communication. I mean, I think the thing that teachers work with, or *combat* the most at Haven High, is definitely like issues with standard English versus vernacular English. Um, like, if there was like one of the *few* goals I had this year was to get kids to stop sayin, um, “he was, she was . . .”

Alim (A): They was?

T: “They was. We be.” Like, those kinds of things and so we spent a lot of time working with that and like recognizing, “Okay, when you’re with your friends you can say *whatever you want* but . . . this is the way it is. I’m sorry, but that’s just the way.” And they’re like, “Well, you know, it doesn’t

make sense to me. This sounds right.” “She was.” Like, and that’s just what they’ve been used to and it’s just . . .

- A: Well, “she was” is right, right? You mean, like, “They was”?
- T: “They was.”
- A: And “we was” and that kinda thing . . .
- T: Yeah, “we was.” Everything is just “was.”
- A: [Laughter] . . .

The teacher goes on to note that her students’ language is “unacceptable,” “disrespectful,” and “abrasive”; that they “can’t codeswitch,” at least not to the point where it’s “natural”; and, although she desires better training, that she is “not equipped” to tell them “why they have to play the game” and speak the dominant variety. This teacher presents an interesting case in that she is genuine about her commitment in seeing as many of her students attend 4-year colleges as possible. And later in the interview when she states, “I have to say it’s kind of disheartening because like despite *all* that time that’s been spent focusing on grammar, like, I don’t really see it having helped enormously,” one gets the sense that she is actually disheartened and saddened by her lack of results.

What teachers like this one are probably not aware of is how they are enacting Whiteness and subscribing to an ideology of linguistic supremacy within a system of daily cultural combat. It is very revealing that the teacher describes the language of her Black students as the thing that teachers at Haven High “*combat* the most.” In fact, her attempt to eradicate the language pattern of her Black students has been “one of the *few goals*” she has had throughout that academic year. The teacher not only works to eradicate the language pattern of her Black students, but also responds negatively to what she calls “unspoken language,” or the students’ “tone.” Further, the attribution of negative characteristics (such as “abrasive” or “disrespectful”) due to cultural differences has been noted frequently in studies of intercultural communication (Gumperz, 1982a, 1982b).

Interestingly, the teacher notes her students’ failure to speak “standard English”—particularly in the case of what’s known as the *generalization of was* to use with plural and second-person subjects (Wolfram, 1993)—while she fails to make several linguistic distinctions herself. Not only does the teacher erroneously point out “he was” and “she was” as cases of BL and imply that BL has a random system of negation, but she is also clearly not aware of the stylistic sensitivity in the use of *was* and *were*. When the teacher says, rather exasperatedly, “Everything is just ‘was’,” she is not recognizing the subtle stylistic alternation of *was* and *were* that is employed by BL speakers, where speakers alternate their use of *was* and *were* based upon various contextual and situational factors. In fact, the teacher goes as far as to say that her Black students do not

have the ability to “codeswitch,” a point which is soundly disproved in Alim (2004b).

Much ethnographic research on language in schools has shown how educational institutions deem particular linguistic and communicative competencies “acceptable,” “rewardable,” and even “truthful” and other competencies (and they are usually not seen as “competencies” by the institution) as “unacceptable,” “punishable,” and yes, “untruthful” (Alim, 2004b; Heath, 1983; Hornberger, 1988). Although the notion of language ideologies may be absent from traditional approaches to language pedagogies, and the development of language pedagogies may be absent from language ideological studies, ideologies and pedagogies are linked in that language pedagogies are inherently ideological, enforcing certain norms at the expense of others (Blommaert, 1999; Jaffe, 1999). As recent events have shown, we live in a time when the mere mention of “Ebonics” or “bilingual education” inspires more than animated debate; it incites profoundly racist and discriminatory discourses about the speakers of those varieties (Baugh, 2000; Collins, 1999). It is within this highly charged political field—in the sense of *state* politics as well as *cultural* politics—that CHHLPs emerge with the aim of not just teaching language, but inspiring pedagogies that make explicit the link between language, power, and social process.

In this important respect, CHHLPs draw heavily from the perspectives of critical language awareness (CLA; Fairclough, 1995; Wodak, 1995) and critical applied linguistics (CAP; Pennycook, 2001). Although CLA and CAP differ in some important ways, both view educational institutions as designed to teach citizens about the current sociolinguistic order of things, without challenging that order. This view of education interrogates the dominating discourse on language and literacy and foregrounds the examination and interconnectedness of identities, ideologies, histories/herstories, and the hierarchical nature of power relations between groups. Of importance, CLA and CAP are not concerned with the study of decontextualized language but rather with the analysis of “opaque and transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language” (Wodak, 1995, p. 207) and how these relationships are performed and contested (Pennycook, 2004).

CHHLPs create a Freireian critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970) of language that educates linguistically profiled and marginalized students about how language is used and, of importance, how language can be used against them. Questions central to the overall project are: “How can language be used to maintain, reinforce, and perpetuate existing power relations?” And, conversely, “How can language be used to resist, redefine, and possibly reverse these relations?” CHHLPs engage in the process of consciousness-raising, that is, the process of actively becoming aware of one’s own position in the world and what to do about it (as in the Black, Chicana/o, women’s, and LGBT liberation movements). By learning about the full scope of their language use (see following) and

how language can actually be used against them (Baugh, 2003; see Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2003), students become more conscious of their communicative behavior and the ways by which they can transform the conditions under which they live.

However, as Reagan (2006) has argued, most critical language awareness programs have come under sharp critique for their overtheorized and under-applied approach to the pressing and immediate challenges of contemporary education. Bearing this in mind, the remainder of this article will focus specifically on pedagogical approaches that empower diverse students. Although each project is really a unit, and can be described at much greater length, the following sections introduce the main pedagogical initiatives and provide sample exercises. This pedagogical framework furthers what Gutierrez (2005) refers to as *socio-critical literacy* by providing a progression of language learning experiences that illustrate a developmental approach, one that brings a theoretically grounded and socioculturally rich pedagogy alive. Moreover, as Morrell (2004) has shown, engaging students in critical research relating to popular culture can be particularly effective, especially when deep and meaningful learning is too often reserved for more privileged others.

REAL TALK: DEVELOPING AN AWARENESS OF SOCIOLINGUISTIC VARIATION

Real talk, in the language of the Hip-Hop Nation, is an idiomatic expression that builds upon what generations of Black Americans have referred to as *straight talk*. Real talk is the hip-hop generation's version of an evolving discourse on language and authenticity in the Black community. CHHLPs borrow the phrase "real talk" to create an alternative metalinguistic discourse on language in educational contexts. The project utilizes "real talk" (naturally occurring conversations) to socialize students into an awareness of sociolinguistic variation. This project builds on the "dialect awareness" programs spearheaded by Walt Wolfram and his colleagues at North Carolina State University and supported by Carolyn Adger and Donna Christian of the Center for Applied Linguistics (Wolfram, Adger, & Christian, 1999). In short, these programs seek to infuse the fundamental principles of sociolinguistic variation into school curricula. The programs get students excited about the inherent variability of language and meet standards proposed by the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) that students should "develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles" (NCTE/IRA, 1996, p. 3). One of the most exciting aspects of the programs is that they encourage students to become ethnographers and collect their own speech data from their local communities.

The Real Talk project begins with the sociolinguistic analysis of a conversation with one of the Bay Area's most well-known street hip-hop artists, JT, the Bigga Figga. The class exercise begins by listening to an audiotaped interview, and copies of the tape are then distributed to the students, each of whom has his or her own tape recorder. The students are instructed to transcribe the first small portion of the tape *exactly as they hear it*. What we then discover as a class is that we have each produced a unique transcript of the same speech sample. Invariably, some students will "standardize" the speech samples, and others will "vernacularize" them. As we search for differences between our transcriptions, students begin to notice sociolinguistic patterns in the rapper's speech (e.g., "In the first sentence he said, 'He run everything,' and then later he said, 'He runs everything.'"). We take this one feature (third-person singular—*s* variability) of the rapper's spoken speech and conduct a sociolinguistic analysis of his speech, which leads to a larger understanding of the structure and systematicity of spoken speech. Students are not only learning about the sociolinguistic variation of spoken language, they are also being introduced to a curriculum that introduces it as a viable modality for learning.

LANGUAGE IN MY LIFE: LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH REFLEXIVE, ETHNOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

After learning about the systematicity of spoken speech, and that sociolinguistic variation refers to the variable frequencies of certain features within a linguistic system, we introduce the concept of variation in terms of language use, or "ways of speaking." The "Language in My Life" project begins by introducing students to Dell Hymes's (1964, 1972) theory of the ethnography of speaking and ends with student-conducted, reflexive, ethnographic analyses of their own speech behavior. The goal is for students to answer the question: How do I use language in my life? They are given an "Ethnography of Speaking" reference sheet that they keep in their binders throughout the unit. The sheet reviews basic concepts in this area, such as *speech situation*, *speech event*, and *speech act*, as levels of analysis in a communicative encounter. (In this case, the speech situation is a hip-hop concert in Oakland, California; the speech event is an interview with New Orleans rapper Juvenile; and speech acts include greetings, jokes, etc.)

Students are presented with another sample of real talk—this time with Juvenile (to use a speaker who is *not* from their local community)—and are guided through an "ethnography of speaking" analysis of an interview, which they learn is a "speech event." A small sample from the interview is used to create a worksheet (full interview appears in Spady, Alim, & Meghelli, 2006):

INTERVIEW WITH JUVENILE

- Alim (A): Wassup, Juve?
- Juvenile (J): Wassup, woadie?
- A: What's goin on?
- J: Chillin, you know me. I'm chillin.
- A: How would you describe the last year/year and half for you?
- J: Spectacular, man! I've been blessed, you know.
- A: It's a blessing, ha?
- J: Workin real hard, you know. Just a lot of things. A lot of things have been goin on and so far everything's been goin right. I've been makin the right moves ...



Students are encouraged to notate the transcript in detail. They are usually adept at identifying a certain level of informality (through the use of “slang” like “wassup,” “chillin,” “you know what I’m saying?”), as well as regionalisms in the New Orleans based rapper’s speech (such as “woadie,” which can mean, “man,” “homie,” etc.; “It’s all gravy!” for the commonly used “It’s all good.”), and my use of “ha?” as an attempt to build rapport with (or “be cool with”) the rapper by using one of his most famous expressions.

But, of course, the students are told that they can gather only so much information by reading a transcript—they have to go out into the field. After introducing the theory and doing a hands-on ethnography of speaking analysis, I wanted the students to be able to analyze their own communication behavior in their everyday environments, from their actual lived experiences. After challenging students and asking them if they thought that *they* could do an ethnography of speaking with their own language data, I introduced the Language in My Life project. The students were instructed to analyze their own communication behavior as it shifted across contexts and situations. As ethnographers, they were charged with carrying an ethnography notebook and documenting their communicative encounters. The notebook consisted of grids that were to be filled in throughout the day. Immediately, this project validates the language practices that students engage in outside of the classroom—for example, *rappin* or *battlin*—by allowing the students to see their speech behavior taken as a subject of analysis. Further, after collecting data on their own speech, students gain a much higher level of metalinguistic awareness (speaking of themselves as

style-shifters possessing multiple languages and a range of speech styles), which allows them to not only better understand the abstract theory of “speaking,” but also to better understand the linguistic landscape of their social worlds. These worlds are not marginalized in the classroom, or “checked at the door,” as some teachers would have it. They are made central to the students’ language learning experience.

HIPHPOGRAPHY: THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF HIP-HOP CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION

After the students have learned about and conducted sociolinguistic and ethnographic analyses of their own speech behavior, we expand the scope of the pedagogy and encourage students to go back into the field to study their social worlds through an analysis of their peer group and peer culture. As seen in the following example, one of the primary ways to accomplish this is through the study of localized lexical usage. We begin by raising students’ awareness to the variety of lexical innovations within hip-hop culture (of course, most students are already aware of this, because they actively participate in these innovations). To pique their interest, as well as to localize the dialogue by focusing on the Bay Area, we provided a specific example of a research interview about the language of hip-hop culture with JT, the Bigga Figga. In the short excerpt that follows, JT provides an “emic” view of hip-hop’s evolving lexicon (full interview appears in Spady et al., 2006).

A [Alim]: What does it mean to be “certified with game”?

J [JT]: “Certified” mean you official. . . How it got incorporated into our language in the streets, from my first experience with the word in the streets, was from “mob” cars. And the mobb cars is Caprice Classics or Chevy Impalas ’87 to ’90. Them three years right there. And if you get a mobb car and it don’t have a certain seal on it, it’s not certified. So when dudes buy the car, it have to have that seal. You want yo car to be certified, you know what I’m saying? And that’s just like if you into the collector’s cars and if it don’t have the same steering wheel or if you change something it’s not certified no more. So it’s original, you know what I’m saying? *And* another meaning for certified meaning that you “official.”. . . If I say, “Man, Alim’s gon handle it. If he said he gon handle it, he certified, man. He gon handle it.” So somebody who word is good.

On reading the transcript aloud as a class, students immediately respond by critiquing phrases, calling some out-of-date, providing new or similar phrases,

comparing with other regional phrases, and so forth. This excitement is channeled into further training in ethnographic methods. For this particular case, we borrow from the introduction to linguist Geneva Smitherman's (2000) *Black Talk: Words and Phrases From the Hood to the Amen Corner*. The worksheet shown in the Appendix translates academic language into a familiar hip-hop stylized way of writing (again, validating both academic language and the language of hip-hop culture).

Students are given further training in these methods as we move through the unit. This type of assignment generates intense interest in ethnographic fieldwork, and some students go above and beyond expectations by interviewing peers, family members, neighbors, and others until they completely run out of tape! One thing that needs to be emphasized is that this is not just a way to “get students excited” about language, but rather, students are told that they are contributing to the body of scholarly literature on BL. They are charged with the historical responsibility of archiving Black culture—in this case, hip-hop culture—through words. In my experience, students have contributed much to the literature. One example is the term *rogue*, a localized example of semantic inversion that highlights a very specific regionality, as it is used *only* within the 2.5 square miles of Sunnyside (Alim, 2004b).

LINGUISTIC PROFILING PROJECT: FROM LANGUAGE USE TO LANGUAGE DISCRIMINATION

Thus far, I have outlined projects that develop students’ metalinguistic awareness, particularly in the area of language use. As I stated earlier, our goal is to develop CHHLPs that do more than provide students with the tools to analyze language and to theorize its use in their local, social worlds (which is a substantial development in its own right). But beyond this, we are also obligated to expose the nature of power relations vis-à-vis language that exists within and beyond our students’ social worlds. Many of our students, particularly those who speak marginalized language varieties, are already acutely aware of the fact that people can use language to discriminate against “others”—their families and themselves are often those “others.” Other students, those for whom a more “standard” variety of English is native, may not have had similar experiences—yet, as Baugh (1998) has already argued, those students also need an education that makes explicit linguistic discrimination, one that recognizes the privileged status of native “standard” English speakers in relation to linguistically profiled and marginalized groups.

In an effort to incorporate the full range of what linguists know about language and its use in society, we begin this lesson by drawing from sociolinguistic research conducted on *linguistic profiling*. Baugh (2003) describes

linguistic profiling as the auditory equivalent of racial profiling. This type of profiling (usually occurring over the phone), for example, can prevent potential homeowners from moving into certain neighborhoods. Linguistic profiling covers the full range of discriminatory practices based on racial, geographic, gender, class, and sexuality inferences made from speech alone.

Students are introduced to this compelling research by watching a video of recent cable news coverage of the Linguistic Profiling project (LPP; Alim, 2005). The LPP research findings (Purnell, Idsardi, & Baugh, 1999), which show that the overwhelming majority of us can make correct racial inferences based on the pronunciation of the single word “Hello,” inspire a whole unit of activities designed to investigate this phenomenon. After introducing linguistic profiling research as “applied linguistics,” the students collect data from the community about similar experiences.

It is at this point in the developmental progression of CHHLPs that students begin to explore the relationships between language and discrimination, as well as the connective marginalities across linguistically profiled and marginalized populations. One brief example illustrates this point. Whereas one Black American student interviewed his aunt and discovered that she had a very painful experience of discrimination in the housing market (i.e., she would often be told that units were “still open” only to be turned away upon arrival), a Latina student shared a narrative from her father in which he was fired from his truck-driving job because of “phony” charges of tardiness. In the first case, the Black American aunt spoke “properly” on the phone, but she was still often denied access to housing based on the visual representation of her race (“when they saw I was a Black person”). And in the second case, the Latino father spoke English as a second language and believed that he was fired *not* because of his job performance (or his race) but his “problem with English,” as he put it. These narratives are sites of exploration and critical interrogation of the links between language, discrimination, and power.

CONCLUSION

In this article, I have outlined a theoretical and practice-based approach to the development of CHHLPs. These pedagogies are grounded in research that examines the (un)official and (un)articulated language ideologies of particular educational institutions. Before designing pedagogies, we need to seriously consider the language ideological combat that is being waged inside and outside of our classroom walls. Otherwise, we will continue to produce language pedagogies that fail our students. Explanations of academic failure as the result of students’ ideological opposition to formal schooling and “acting White” often miss the complexity and multidirectionality of ideological combat. More directly,

ethnographic studies (Alim, 2004b; Carter 2005) reveal that teachers can spend as much time devaluing students' language and culture as students spend rejecting that devaluation (which is not the same as rejecting "acting White"). The irony is that teachers spend an inordinate amount of time "focusing on English grammar," while their students are busy taking English to a "whole nother level," that is, "grammaticalizing" it.

To keep it real with our students, we need to recognize that the full body of available research on language, its structure, its use, and its role in constructing identities and mediating intergroup relations, is not produced solely for the consumption of scholars. Rather, this knowledge can be used to develop pedagogies that create high levels of metalinguistic awareness through reflexive ethnographic and sociolinguistic analyses of speech. In this way, CHHLPs operationalize the vast body of research on language for the purposes of raising the linguistic and social consciousness of all students.

Our ultimate goal is to more broadly implement progressive, critical language pedagogies to meet the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students participating in the Global Hip-Hop Nation (Mitchell, 2001). Teachers of linguistically profiled and marginalized youth often struggle with the contradictions emerging from their own ideological positions, training, lived experiences, and sometimes overwhelmingly antidemocratic school cultures and practices. To this end, more research on teachers' language ideologies and experiences is needed. CHHLPs aim to use this research to engage teachers in the same type of critical language pedagogies outlined for students in this article. Teachers, too, can benefit greatly from reflexive analyses of their own language behaviors and ideologies. In fact, it is only once teachers develop a metaideological awareness that they can begin to work to change them—and be more fully prepared to teach all students more effectively.

Arriving at this awareness is seen as the first step in challenging a given social order, a "wake-up call" that encourages students and teachers to interrogate received discourses on language, which are always connected to issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, and power. As Fairclough has pointed out, critical language pedagogies have a "substantial 'shock' potential" and "can help people overcome their sense of impotence by showing them that existing orders of discourse are not immutable" (as cited in Reagan, 2006, p. 14). Training in critical language issues can help teachers (such as the one in this article) be not only well-meaning but also well-informed enough to address student questions about the imposition of dominant language norms. With such an approach, teachers can stop apologizing for "the way things are," and begin helping their students envision the way things can *be*. Following Pennycook (2001, p. 176), this approach recognizes that language teaching and learning, as well as the study of these practices, is "always already political and, moreover, an instrument and a resource for *change*, for challenging and changing the wor(l)d."

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APPENDIX

Ethnographic methods used by Geneva Smitherman (2000) to write *Black Talk: Words and Phrases From the Hood to the Amen Corner*. We should use all of these methods in writing our own book (by the way, we need a title – what's up?)

- (1) *Written language surveys and word lists* completed by Black people. She made up surveys and gave them to some folks that she knew, and many that she didn't, and asked them to fill out the surveys. What would a survey look like?
- (2) *Songs and hit recordings*. Basically, she blocked out 30 minutes or so in her daily schedule to play some of her CDs and tapes. As the songs played, she listened really closely for any unique words and phrases. Most of us listen to music way more than 30 minutes a day, right? I know I do.
- (3) *Radio shows*. My radio stay *locked* on KMEL, so this one should be easy. Whether you listen to Chuy in the morning or Big Von in the evening for the 7 O'clock Drop, you'll hear tons of slang words and phrases.
- (4) *Movies and television*. You can block out 30 minutes to watch your favorite TV show (106th and Park, Rap City, BET, whatever) and catch all the slang that's being used. If you happen to be watching a movie that day, or that week, pay extra attention to the slang. You can probably get *hecka* words from one movie.
- (5) *Collecting words* from community bulletins, leaflets, magazines, announcements or other written material. Can you think of any that you might use?
- (6) *Face-to-face interviews*. You can literally ask people if they know any slang words or phrases that you can include for your slang dictionary. Sometimes we can't think of all of these terms by ourselves, right, so we need some help from our people. How would you ask somebody to help you? Who would you ask?
- (7) *Eavesdropping*. I ain't gotta tell y'all about that one. Mmm-hmmmm ...
- (8) *Participant observation*. Participant observation means that you are not only *observing* the event or the scene, but you are also *actively participating* in it. In what events or scenes do you hear lots of slang talk? I bet you the talk at lunch time is full of slang words and phrases, huh? This is your first official ethnographic assignment. You are to be a participant observer at lunch tomorrow (Thursday) and at least one other day before we meet again next Wednesday. Keep your lil notebooks handy so you can jot words down as you hear them. I know some of you are dying to ask, so yeah, you can combine this with *eavesdropping*, but if you get popped in the eye, I'ma be like Silkk the Shokker and say, "OOOOOH, it ain't my fault!"