

Adopting Home Language and Multimodality in Composition Courses

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Abstract: When considering how African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) and multimodality can be used in composition courses, it is important to consider the rhetorical power of language. Standard Written English (SWE) is the standard for academic and professional writing in the United States, and it has been the assigned goal for many composition classes for decades. However, some students have struggled with SWE over time because it is not their “home” or native language. Also, their home language may be interpreted as incorrect speech, which can give the impression that they do not know how to communicate effectively. This is far from the truth, but instructors can negatively instill this impression by not viewing their languages as acceptable.

KEYWORDS: AAVE, SWE, STROL, techno-inclusionism, social justice, deysconscious racism, bodily learning, pedagogy, multimodality, low-bridge assignment, code-meshing, sonic rhetoric, remix theory.

Introduction

I have come across studies discussing the use of code-meshing in composition classrooms, studies demonstrating how to replace print-based composition assignments with multimodal assignments, and also research on African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) as a home language and what that means in relation to students. However, there is a gap in research regarding what would happen if these theories were used together to teach college composition students to better understand components of Standard Written English. My study will attempt to fill this gap in research by showing how AAVE, code-meshing, and multimodality can be used to teach Standard Written English (SWE) in composition classrooms. My study responds to Alexander and Rhodes’ theory of techno-inclusionism, Vershawn Young’s theory of code-meshing, and Hocks and Comstock’s theory of resonance and multimodality in composition classrooms.

This research will attempt to answer the following questions: 1) can multimodal assignments be used to teach students to think more about how they use Standard Written English? 2) Does code-meshing assist students with using SWE more in assignments or in other contexts? and 3) can auditory rhetoric and techno-inclusionism impact how students approach composition? My research will embody what John Creswell has described as the concurrent triangulation approach (Creswell 2017) . This means that I will collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously to confirm any connections between the two data types.

My hypothesis is that students’ comfort levels in using Standard Written English can increase with the use of African-American Vernacular English, techno-inclusionism (using technology in place of print-based assignments), and code-meshing. I will use a series of reflection assignments to examine my hypothesis. Data analyzed and collected from completed

assignments will be paired with weekly journal entries containing class observations. Journal entries will be paired with data to determine whether my observations and probabilities match the data results. This approach will serve my research well because through mixed method approaches, it actively engages students to ascertain their comfort levels and outcomes involving multimodality, AAVE, code-meshing, sonic rhetoric, and remix theory. I hope to demonstrate what can happen when these concepts are used together. My case study will also attempt to address issues with diversity of expression, confidence, fluency, cultural awareness, and identity for students; journal entries will include implications regarding student observations related to inclinations for each concept.

This study will be conducted at Clark Atlanta University in a freshman composition course. Clark Atlanta University will be an ideal place to conduct this study because the student population is predominantly African-American, which may result in more students having AAVE as a home language. Data collection and analysis will take place over the course of the one semester. The results of this study could help teach composition instructors how to “reduce language prejudice and promote the power of language as opposed to the codes of power” (Young, 2014). My study uses techno-inclusionism and code-meshing pedagogy to promote academic literacy in composition courses. It also works to introduce more low-bridge technologies, a phrase coined by Daniel Anderson. Low-bridge technologies focus on turning computer literacy from an idea or thing to an activity, and they help to bridge gaps between composition and multimodality in the classroom. These types of assignments offer innovative ways to view, create, and respond to composition.

STROL, and Code-Meshing

Scholars such as Geneva Smitherman have been working with the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) since the 1970s to implement changes in how composition instructors approach teaching students how to use language in the classroom. Smitherman’s push for recognition and inclusion of AAVE comes from an understanding of the duality many Black people feel on a regular basis. For instance, she claims that, “On the one hand, Blacks have believed that the price of the ticket for Black education and survival and success in White America is eradication of Black Talk. On the other hand, Blacks also recognize that language is bound up with Black identity and culture” (129). This connection between survival and success in White America and eradication of Black Talk demonstrates how AAVE is often not considered valuable or correct. However, African Americans know the importance of maintaining culture and identity with language. The struggle comes in changing mindsets to see how survival and success can be achieved without eliminating home language.

This resolution has been known as Students Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL), and it has pushed for instructors to have the proper training for respecting and upholding the rights of students to their home languages. Failing to do so causes issues regarding seeing one language as inferior to others. This is exemplified by CCCC in the following excerpt from an early version of their SRTOL statement: “The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another” (Perryman-Clark 2013). Such dominance reinforces power constructs based on race and economic status.

Scholars such as Vershawn Young and Suresh Canagarajah have theorized about using code-meshing to help students find balance in using both SWE and AAVE. Code-meshing is the blending of two or more languages together in communication. Code-meshing pedagogies work to teach students how to use home language and standard language together to relay ideas. They also cross lines between traditional and creative speech to promote critical analysis of language used and the impact it will have on the audience or reader. It also encourages students to work with academic and professional language while being able to use their own home language.

Code-meshing is important to composition practice because it teaches students to think multi-dimensionally about writing and language. In Vershawn Young and Aja Martinez's book, *Code-Meshing as World English: Pedagogy, Policy, Performance*, Dr. Theresa Malphrus Welford discusses how code-meshing has impacted her students: "In my experience, students write confidently and enthusiastically when they are allowed to mesh academic language with their own language. Best of all, this combination helps their writing crackle with energy" (30). I experience this same feeling when students code-mesh in my Introduction to Poetry class at Clark Atlanta University. My students tend to enjoy the assignments more when given the opportunity to express themselves in their own language. Code-meshing can help with teaching composition because it gives students more opportunity to communicate in their own words, which ultimately makes them want to put more thought and effort into completing assignments.

Code-meshing practices are also significant because they work to teach students about acceptance and change in communication. Assignments such as video blogging, group tweeting, and video narratives can be used to help students gain more experience with crafting language. The push would be for students to write in a voice they are comfortable with. Instructor feedback would work to teach students about formation, sound, and communicative rhetoric. This type of feedback lets students maintain their original voice while helping them establish the most rhetorical power.

Students can use composition in ways that showcase abilities to manipulate and blend languages to effectively relay different messages. One instance of code-meshing is demonstrated in the 2019 Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) Call for Papers (CFP). In this CFP, Professors Vershawn Young and Elaine Richardson implement code-meshing to explain and model performance rhetoric. They each used parts of AAVE and SWE to highlight the power performance rhetoric holds. In the CFP, Young says the following:

We in the discipline wanna take our two peas and pick them outa they one pod, where rhetoric be in the mind, while composition be the written manifestation of that internal work...we gon show up, show out, practice, and theorize performance-rhetoric and performance-composition. Ahm talkin bout buttressing the public good and engaging communication pedagogies that open possibilities...(CCCC 2019).

This CFP represents the potential rhetorical power students tap into. Young's use of the "be" variant and Consonant Cluster Reduction (removal of suffixes) demonstrate functions of AAVE, which is blended with Young's use of SWE. This blending of linguistic concepts exemplifies how code-meshing promotes proficiency and understanding of multiple language forms. Students can hopefully achieve success with code-meshing without having to neglect part of their linguistic identity.

It is important for students to be able to learn other languages without feeling the need to neglect their home languages. In the book titled *Other People's English: Code-Meshing, Code-Switching, and African American Literacy*, Vershawn Young, Rusty Barrett, Y'Shanda Young-Rivera, and Kim Lovejoy discuss how switching and meshing languages helps students to grasp how to use each language in various contexts. Throughout the text, the authors provide definitions for concepts such as code-meshing, code-switching, and self-directed writing. Of these concepts, code-meshing was viewed as the most effective teaching strategy because it shows the need for bi-dialectalism in both school and the workplace. Code-meshing is preferred over code-switching because it teaches students how languages work together to get certain messages across. In *Other People's English*, Young references Suresh Canagarajah's methods:

Canagarajah reveals that code-switching causes linguistic division because students must separate their dialect registers from their academic registers. He also shows that it breeds racial tension among African Americans and encourages them to view each other in racially suspect ways, producing charges of acting White." (Young 2014)

Young's excerpt on Canagarajah implies that code-switching promotes keeping languages separate from one another, which plays into the idea of one language being viewed as dominant over another. The idea of dominant languages can be challenged with critical pedagogy. In *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies*, Ann George describes critical pedagogy as one that "engages students in analyses of the unequal power relations that produce and are produced by cultural practices and institutions (including schools)," and which "aims to help students develop the tools that will enable them to challenge this inequality" (77). Teaching code-meshing through critical pedagogy can work to show students how different languages can be used in both casual and professional settings.

I believe that one way to teach students about AAVE and code-meshing is with self-directed writing. Self-directed writing allows students to write freely, so they can respond to prompts in whatever form of English they feel comfortable using. Instructors can use this knowledge of code-meshing and self-directed writing to teach students how to blend AAVE and SWE together naturally. This process is a part of expressive pedagogy, which "employs freewriting, journal keeping, reflective writing, and small group dialogic collaborative response to foster a writer's aesthetic, cognitive, and moral development" (Ogbu 2003). Dr. John Ogbu attempted to use a variation of expressive pedagogy in the 1990s in black middle-class schools in Oakland, California. Although the strategy helped determine that students felt they would be elevated scholastically, these students believed that their instructors were prejudiced against them. Despite this setback, Dr. Ogbu was able to determine that community forces play a role in how language is used and interpreted. Ogbu's study serves as a great model for observing AAVE and SWE practices for students, and helps me determine how to go a step further with my study.

Ogbu's study highlighted how African-American students viewed AAVE as language used for informal conversations with friends, yet they recognized SWE as the proper language to use when speaking to a teacher. This mindset is detrimental because it encourages a need for students to conform to succeed. One statement from Pablo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* reads "Indeed, the interests of the oppressors lie in 'changing the consciousness of the oppressed, not the situation which oppresses them, 'for the more the oppressed can be led to adapt to that situation, the more easily they can be dominated'" (Freire 1993). Instructors can be seen as the "oppressors" here because they often enforce the need to conform and adapt on to students. If a

student is constantly told that their form of speech is wrong, then they may either give up or disregard their home language in attempts to meet the dominant success standard. Students should never feel pressured to trade their identity for success.

Composition instructors need to find a way to critique writing and language without eliminating the student's voice. This process must take place in a way that eliminates what Condon and Young's *Performing Antiracist Pedagogy in Rhetoric, Writing, and Communication* calls "Dysconscious racism" (Condon and Young 2017). Dysconscious racism is a form of racism that tacitly accepts dominant White norms and privileges. It is not the absence of consciousness but an impaired consciousness or distorted way of thinking about race. In addition to race, teaching writing also deals with analyzing rhetoric. By having students view rhetoric as a whole-body experience, Jacqueline Royster was able to get her students to think more in-depth about writing, reflection, and speculation. This rhetorical approach also allowed Royster's students to improve their critical thinking and rhetorical decision-making skills:

When I teach writing, I do so using a rhetorical approach. Early in my teaching experience, I learned that students don't always take easily to the traditional jargon of the field... I thought about my own rhetorical decision-making process and the ways that I might connect the concepts to lived experience. I began asking my students to think of rhetoric as a whole-body experience" instead of a set of disembodied practices for composing or analyzing a text as an academic exercise" (Royster 2012).

Multimodality, Sonic Rhetoric and Remix Theory

In addition to STROL and code-meshing, linguists and rhetoricians have been advocating for academia to focus on how multimodality, sonic rhetoric, and remix theory can help students display their identities while learning new how to compose messages in various technological formats. These new methods can also work to gain a student's interest by moving away from the traditional handwritten or typed essay.

Multimodality is a term that brings two concepts to life, techno-comp and techno-inclusionism. Techno-comp is the use of technology as a form of composition, and techno-inclusionism is the drive to include the new information and communication technologies in the composing process and in our curricula (Alexander and Rhodes 2014). Techno-inclusionism promotes the use of technology in place of print-based activities. This concept works to garner student interest while teaching students how to go about critical thinking and analysis when composing. Also, techno-inclusionism focuses on audience, argument, and other key concepts when considering persuasion, sound, and imagery, and persuasiveness in composition. Alexander and Rhodes mention real-world value for techno-inclusionism when they reference Carolyn Handa's *Visual Rhetoric in a Digital World: A Critical Sourcebook*. Handa, in her introduction, claims that:

Students who possess a high degree of technological skill may see the value in knowing how to create a document using the latest digital tool but not understand the importance of thinking carefully about rhetorical questions such as the appropriate audience, purpose, tone, and argument...Preparing students to communicate in the digital world using a full range of rhetorical skills will enable them to analyze and critique both the technological tools and the multimodal texts produced with those tools (Handa 2004).

To attempt to prepare students to communicate in the digital world, the instructor must understand the value of using techno-inclusionism in the classroom.

Another way to potentially teach students about techno-inclusionism is through sonic rhetoric. Sonic rhetoric, also known as auditory rhetoric, involves looking at how sound plays a role in how a student receives and interprets a message. It also looks at use of sound within writing and composition projects and classes; these types of assignments can assist students in finding innovative ways to show their knowledge in composition classrooms. Sonic rhetoric would also work with techno-comp. Soundscapes and other assignments can create parallels between how words are written, how they are spelled, and how they sound.

In “Tuning the Playing Field: Teaching Ways of Knowing Sound in First Year Writing,” Katherine Ahern introduces the idea of tuning as a pedagogical approach for introducing students to sonic rhetoric. Tuning is described as a process that “focuses the listening of the performers to find agreed upon values, as much as it sets those values” (Ahern 2013). This process of focusing listening requires the person speaking to consider how a listener will receive and interpret their message. Ahern’s article discusses how she assigned her students to do musical ethnography; she had her students reflect on how classmates from other cultures and communities would receive the music encompassed in their musical ethnographies. This reflection worked as part of getting students to analyze the impact certain sounds can have on how someone interprets a form of language.

Another theory that involves techno-comp and techno-inclusionism is remix theory. Virginia Kuhn defines remix theory as “a digital utterance expressed across the registers of the verbal, the aural, and the visual” (Kuhn). This type of instruction involves recreation of a song, video, or another form of media, can show students the importance of arrangement with regards to a strong and convincing message. Remix theory has been demonstrated in video parodies and mashups such as Bleacher Report’s “Game of Zones” and “NFL Bad Lip Reading.” Each of these examples uses altered sounds and images to recreate recorded moments with new messages.

One critical aspect of both sonic rhetoric and remix theory is resonance. In “Composing for Sound: Sonic Rhetoric as Resonance,” Hocks and Comstock introduce the concept of resonance as “an umbrella term for the intimacy, presence, and movement (the “verb-ness”) created by a sound’s qualities, like tonality, amplitude, or cadence” (Hocks and Comstock 2017, 138). Dealing with resonance involves reviewing how listeners connect certain components of sound with a text, place, idea, or thing. Also, “In our classrooms, resonance becomes both a physical phenomenon and metaphor for a sonic rhetorical engagement, an approach that takes into account how a listener’s auditory system, as well as the shape of a particular space, will allow her to vibrate at particular frequencies over others” (Hocks and Comstock 2017, 139). Understanding how sound can impact a person’s reaction to language will help to accurately assess students’ responses to AAVE and SWE in multiple capacities.

Multimodal listening is the approach discussed in Steph Ceraso’s essay “(Re) Educating The Senses: Multimodal Listening, Bodily Learning, And the Composition of Sonic Experiences.” Ceraso mentions multimodal listening as a concept used “to expand how we think about and practice listening as a situated, full-bodied act” (Ceraso 2014). This approach to sound is used to

teach students about the impact it has on their feelings and behaviors in different circumstances. Assessing the resonance of sound can also help students to understand how rhetoric and composition practices require full embodiment, which includes voice inflection, word usage, and other key factors. Multimodal listening is a component of critical pedagogy that pushes students to take a closer look at connections between sound, language, and identity.

Multimodal Composition

Multimodal composition is not just an extension of traditional composition, and we cannot simply overlay traditional frameworks onto composing with multiple modes. Alexander and Rhodes define multimodal composition as “communication using multiple modes that work purposely to create meaning” (Alexander and Rhodes 2014). It is imperative that students become more familiar with multimodal composition because it is arguably the most liberating form of composition. Also, in *On Multimodality: New Media in Composition Studies*, it is expressed that “...students increasingly need to be versed in a variety of textual, visual, and multimodal formats if they are to participate as literate citizens and workers in an increasing multimediated world” (Alexander and Rhodes 2014, 11).

Sound and technology in the classroom can be utilized through assignments that incorporate oral communication and music. Code-meshing pedagogies are beneficial for studying multimodal assignments within your newly proposed curriculum in order to see if they facilitate or enact the goals of code-meshing from students’ reflections. This idea is exemplified in Turner, Hayes, and Way’s article “Critical Multimodal Hip Hop Production: A Social Justice Approach to African American Language and Literacy Practices.” This article is a case study about a program that taught students to embrace their skills in both AAVE and Critical Multimodal Hip Hop Production (CMHHP). The critical components of this study came when the instructor had the students develop surveys for people in their community to see what improvements needed to be made. In addition to collecting this data, students also learned how to produce music and videos. Once students had a grasp on media production, they used their home language of AAVE to create songs and music videos expressing their views on social issues in their communities. Students were able to use language they were familiar with, which allowed them to be more comfortable expressing their viewpoints to other people: “By having teachers and students collaborate in CMHHP or by showing teachers the multimodal hip hop productions their students have produced, teachers can appreciate and understand the sociocultural background of their students” (Turner, et. al, 2013, 352). Such acknowledgement can then lead them to create similar assignments that allow students to use their home language(s) to convey various messages.

Instructors should step back and examine the expectations they have of their students. Research has shown that stereotypes impact teaching and learning. This impact has been termed stereotype threat by Claude Steele; Steele defines stereotype threat as the threat of being viewed through the lens of a negative stereotype, or the fear of doing something that would inadvertently confirm that stereotype. (96) Mya Poe’s essay “Reframing Race in Teaching Writing Across the Curriculum” further explains this issue and offers a remedy to stereotype threat: “If the goal is to help prepare students for real-world rhetorical situations, then teaching writing across the curriculum means preparing students for the multilingual spaces in which they will be writing

and working.” (Poe 2017, 99-100) Such a statement suggests that instructors and administrators should amend their teaching of writing to have a more authentic real-world focus.

There are many studies that deal with teaching SWE to AAVE-speaking students, but there is a lack of literature that focuses on using AAVE to teach SWE in composition classes. My research works to fill that deficiency in Rhetoric and Composition scholarship by showcasing parallels between the languages, focusing on the rhetorical choices students make in their writing, and demonstrating how to best utilize code-meshing in academic and professional settings.

In the book titled *Multimodal Composition: A Critical Sourcebook*, one case study mentioned how students submitted digital playlists and collages to express their understanding of literacy. These types of assignments are viewed as “low bridge technologies” (Anderson 2008). By providing innovative alternatives to composition assignments, students were able to critically analyze texts and find new ways to effectively communicate their interpretations of certain historical and cultural texts. This type of instruction requires hands-on work between students and teachers as they each develop technical skills and understanding of multiple literacies (Lutkewitte 2013, 377-379).

Giving multimodal assignments also gets students acquainted with more modern presentation methods. Jason Palmeri reinforces this ideology in *Remixing Composition: A History of Multimodal Writing Pedagogy*:

... it is not enough just to add print literature by African Americans to the canon; if only teachers truly wish to engage deeply with African American cultural production, they must also make a space for auditory communication. In addition to teaching students about the usefulness of print writing, English teachers must also ask students to critically consider the ways that ‘written documents are limited in what they can teach about life and survival in the world’” (Palmeri 2012, 73-74).

Limiting students to written documents can hinder a student’s technological proficiency. This knowledge will be essential when it comes time to present information to different audiences. By learning how to infuse their identities into multiple forms of communication, students can improve their literacy skills and awareness of language. When teachers expose their students to devices such as soundscapes, sound-mapping, and Photoshop, they are showing confidence in the class’s ability to express themselves.

Real-World Pedagogical Examples

Teaching students about AAVE through sonic rhetoric can help to decrease language bias in composition. AAVE-speaking students are often forced to move away from their home language in composition classrooms because of the perceptions people have made about a language that may sound unpleasant to them. Discomfort can cause students to feel like outcasts, which is why instructors must teach students new listening practices while influencing them to appreciate both AAVE and SWE. Instructors must first learn to eliminate any negative perceptions they have of AAVE and increase their awareness of the language and its purposes in communication. Appreciation also requires an in-depth discussion and analysis of syntactical and phonetic choices one can make in each language. Proper training is imperative for educators because without it, the cycle of language bias and discrimination will continue.

A real-world focus must step back to recognize the detrimental effects of previous teachings that have solely pushed for Standard Written English. Philosopher and critical pedagogy advocate, Pablo Freire, alludes to these effects: “The oppressed suffer from the duality which has established itself in their innermost being. They discover that without freedom they cannot exist authentically. Yet although they desire authentic existence, they fear it. They are at one and the same time themselves and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalized” (Freire 1993, 30). Although Freire was not directly referring to language here, his point correlates with that of what an AAVE-speaking student faces. Students who struggle with Standard Written English may feel as if they need to leave their home languages and identities behind to succeed in life.

Students with diverse backgrounds often come into composition classes with difficulty speaking and/or understanding SWE. While the student should be exposed to SWE and how it is used, they must determine how the voices of their home languages will be heard. From a rhetorical standpoint, composition pedagogy has previously been structured to emphasize SWE, which can appear oppressive to some students. Unfortunately, this felt oppression teaches students to either conform to dominant linguistic practices, or risk being ridiculed for using rhetorical techniques of an oppressed people: “In a humanizing pedagogy the method ceases to be an instrument by which the teachers can manipulate the students, because it expresses the consciousness of the students themselves” (Freire 1993, 51). Freire’s depiction of a humanizing pedagogy is one that allows students to retain their identities while being aware of different rhetorical choices they can make. Teaching students about code-meshing and code-switching in composition classes can provide them with awareness of how to express themselves through various modes of communication.

Methodology

My hypothesis is that students’ comfort levels with Standard Written English can increase with the use of African-American Vernacular English (AAVE), techno-inclusionism (using technology in place of print-based assignments), and code-meshing. This approach involves collecting both quantitative and qualitative data from assignments and observations simultaneously to determine if a connection occurs between them (Creswell 2017, 213). I will use a series of reflection assignments to examine my hypothesis. This qualitative approach will assess how students complete and respond to these assignments. This method will serve my case study well because it investigates the connection between teaching, assignment format, and assessment scores. I will attempt to teach students about AAVE, SWE, code-meshing, and multimodal assignments while inquiring about their levels of comfort and familiarity with these theories and forms of language. Through this case study, I intend to address issues with diversity of expression, confidence, fluency, cultural awareness, and identity for students.

Teacher Research

My research will include code-meshing African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) and Standard Written English (SWE) in multimodal assignments. My choice for this research idea is based partly on my familiarity with both forms of English. Staci Perryman-Clark discusses the purposeful use of AAVE syntax and phonology in students’ writing. Focusing on African-American students’ writing displays how students can go about style switching “between different styles and phonological and syntactical patterns” (Perryman-Clark 2013, 58). The

assignments I will develop will deal with students addressing the impact AAVE, SWE, and code-meshing can have on rhetoric and composition. It is also important to analyze work from non-AAVE-speaking students to determine how they can benefit from purposeful phonological and syntactical choices with language. Work from non-AAVE-speaking students will be analyzed using the same measures to determine how well they understand AAVE and code-meshing along with SWE.

This research will also analyze the impact techno-comp and techno-inclusionism have on students' understanding of multimodality, rhetoric, and code-meshing. It is important to consider rhetorical impact of visual, verbal, and auditory rhetoric. Low-bridge technologies— such as video narratives, digital playlists, and soundscapes will be used by students to demonstrate their understanding of language. These assignments can be used to connect students' technical skills to the rhetorical literacies they will learn throughout the semester (Anderson 2008, 52). Video narratives can either serve as essays or work with essays to demonstrate solid abilities to compose, communicate, and convey messages in media. It also utilizes new pedagogical approaches to teaching composition. Alexander and Rhodes examine the use of video narratives to create one message. Code-meshing should be used with digital collages, video narratives, soundscapes, and other multimodal assignments to reinforce principles for how Standard Written English can be used to formulate and express ideas.

Connecting sound to language and identity has much to do with determining the influence an environment can have on how someone perceives a sound. Digital tools such as sound maps and soundscapes work to provide setting and timeframe information to associate with certain sounds. This additional information causes the listener to take multiple variables into account. These variables include 1) what may have been happening at the time, 2) what type of setting the sound is occurring in, 3) how the sound makes them feel, and 4) how the sound could possibly be reinvented. Students in my study will be expected to take these variables into account in their soundscape assignments. These variables were also assessed in a case study conducted in “Reactions to African-American English: Do Phonological Features Matter.” In this article, three Communication Studies professors at California State University decided to use soundscapes to test how sound can influence judgment. For this study, six young women were “recorded reading a brief definition of the term “academic motivation” (Rodriguez, et. al. 409). Four of the women were African-American, and the other two women were Anglo-American. Each of the African-American women spoke using a feature of AAVE; two of them used a moderate amount of AAVE, and the other two used a strong amount of AAVE. The two Anglo-American women spoke in Standard English. After having participants listen and respond to the recordings, the results indicated that participants viewed everyone speaking AAVE to have an accent. They also considered the women who spoke SE to be more attractive than the women who used AAVE. Rodriguez's article on sounds and judgment showcases how dominant language ideology influences perception.

Procedures

My research proposal has been submitted and approved by IRB committees for both Georgia State University and Clark Atlanta University. A Composition II class will be offered that highlights multimodal composition, SWE, and code-meshing. The syllabus will map out how students will learn about low-bridge technologies, multimodal literacy, and code-meshing. This

process will consider the following statement from Daniel Anderson, “Motivation becomes not just an effect of integrating low-bridge technologies into the classroom, but a necessary ingredient of conceptions of critical literacy meant to promote agency and change.” (Anderson 2008, 45-46) This integration can work to showcase how students demonstrate multiple forms of literacy and topical understanding. Low-bridge technologies will ultimately work to display how students perceive use, receive, and interpret AAVE and SWE in technology.

Participants have been given an informed consent form that outlines what will be expected of them. Students will be given the opportunity to sign and return the consent form to participate in class activities. Completed assignments will be a course requirement for all students, but data for my study will only be collected from students who consented to have their work used. Consent forms will be distributed and collected independently reviewed after final grades have been submitted at the end of the semester. Students will be educated on significant phonological features of AAVE and SWE. Students will be taught how to utilize multimodality to develop writing that fuses SWE with AAVE or another non-Standard form of English. This teaching will be broken up into three units.

The first unit will focus on code-meshing. I will introduce students to various principles and guidelines for SWE, AAVE, and code-meshing. I will also discuss how each form of English words separately while also discussing and modeling how code-switching works. This unit will involve the creation of Cause-and-Effect and Persuasion mini essays and a Soundscape assignment. Students will be introduced to the platforms called Audacity and the GNU Image Manipulation Program (GIMP). Audacity will be used for soundscapes because they are compatible with all devices, and the GNU Image Manipulation Program will be used with Audacity to make video narratives. All students will have free access to these platforms. The soundscape assignment will serve as the midterm assignment for the semester. It will allow students to consider the cause and effect of language use and sound on how a message is received. It will also reflect on how effective certain sounds and language works in persuasion.

The second unit will focus on multimodality. In this unit, the soundscape assignment will then lead to the video narrative by determining how sound and language can work when paired with video and gestural communication. The evaluation and rhetorical analysis essays coming between the soundscape and video narrative will focus on the impact altered sounds, images, and language has on their reception of someone or something. Students will also reflect on how sounds, images, and language influence their perceptions of race and identity. Each assessment leading to the video narrative will allow students to critically think about how to best utilize code-meshing, technology (sound and images), and written composition together to create a persuasive message.

Throughout the semester, I will teach students about SWE and different forms of digital multimodal literacy. I will first also introduce students to rules and linguistic features for AAVE. These lessons will include discussion of subject-verb agreement, prefixes and suffixes, visual rhetoric, auditory rhetoric, and remix theory. Students will create digital multimodal assignments throughout the semester. Journaling of my observations will take place after each class meeting as part of the concurrent triangulation research strategy. At the end of the semester, I will analyze my students’ assignments and reflections to see if they align with my observations. Putting each

set of data with the others can be used to pinpoint various comfort levels for language use, diversity of expression, cultural awareness, and identity retention. These variables will be measured with nominal scales of home language use, race, identity, and confidence. Inter-rater reliability will take place for each assignment. I will work with a colleague at Clark Atlanta University to review assignments and come to a consensus about how to interpret the data collected from students.

Sample and Research Design

My study will be conducted in a freshman composition class of 20-25 students. Participants will be freshmen from Clark Atlanta University. Clark Atlanta University is a Historically Black College and University (HBCU), which currently means that the student population is predominately African-American. Since the student population is almost exclusively African-American, I expect to be limited to only having African-American participants. However, Anglo-American and other non-African-American students will be accounted for with my demographic survey, which is represented in figure one below. My research will have a mixed-methods design with content analysis of post-assignment reflections from students and myself. This information will be used to assess trends, attitudes, and observations. This course will be separated into two units, code-meshing and multimodality. The code-meshing unit will consist of two traditional assignments (cause-and-effect essay and persuasion essay) and one low-bridge assignment (soundscapes requiring use of multiple voices). The multimodality unit will consist of two traditional assignments (evaluation essay and rhetorical analysis essay) and one low-bridge assignment (video narrative).

The traditional assignments will be used ease students into multimodality. Students will learn about the theories of code-meshing, sonic rhetoric, remix theory and multimodal platforms such as Audacity and the GNU Image Manipulation Program (GIMP) affiliated with soundscapes and video narratives, while completing traditional assignments. This allows students to gain more experience with composing messages and learning from modeled behavior. On the first day of class, students will be given a survey to complete about their classification, gender, home language, and experience with AAVE, SWE, and multimodality. Thorough explanations of AAVE, SWE, code-meshing, and other concepts will take place within the units leading to each major assignment. Figures one through five serve as assignment prompts students will complete after completing and submitting assignments.

Figure 1
AAVE, SWE, and Multimodality Demographic Survey

What is your classification?

1) Freshman	2) Sophomore	3) Junior	4) Senior	5) Graduate Student
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Which language do feel most comfortable using in daily conversation?

1) African-American Vernacular English	2) Standard Written English	3) Spanish	4) French	5) Other: (Write in)
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What do you identify as?

1) Male	2) Female	3) Other	4) I'd rather not say
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How much experience do you have with using African-American Vernacular English?

1) None	2) A little	3) Some	4) A lot
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How much experience do you have with using Standard Written English?

1) None	2) A little	3) Some	4) A lot
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How much experience do you have with using technology?

1) None	2) A little	3) Some	4) A lot
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What race or ethnicity do you identify as? Circle all that apply.

1) Black/African-American	2) White/Caucasian	3) Latino/of Hispanic descent	4) Asian or Pacific Islander	5) Other (Write in)
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Figure 2
Assignment and Reflection Prompts

Cause and Effect Mini-Essay Prompt by Mack Curry IV

Cause and Effect Mini-Essay (10%, 100 points)

Due: No later than 9:20am on Tuesday, February 5th, 2019

Submission Instructions: Assignments on Canvas

Introduction: For the past few weeks, we have been discussing symbolism, tone, and other various components that play into causes and effects of how messages are constructed and received.

Instructions: In a 2-3page (not including Works Cited) essay, write about the causes and effects code-meshing has had on your interactions with other people. Be sure to mention what linguistic, gestural, audio, visual, and written variables impact those causes and effects.

Essay Component	Function
Introduction Paragraph	Provide background information about your topic, what your purpose is with this essay, and why you think this information is important.
Thesis Statement	The thesis statement should also mention the main points (rationale). The thesis should be clear, easily identifiable, and preferably at the end of the introduction paragraph.
Body Paragraphs	Body paragraphs should contain supporting evidence for your thesis. The supporting evidence should be clear and detailed to accurately prove your points. Also, these paragraphs should start with topic sentences that set the tone for what information will be included in the remainder of the paragraph.
Conclusion Paragraph	Conclusion paragraphs restate your thesis statement. The conclusion paragraph should serve as a summary of what has already been stated, so no new information is allowed.
Works Cited page (starts on separate page from the essay)	A Works Cited page cites your research resources used to support your claims.
MLA Format	MLA format for the entire assignment (including the Works Cited page). This includes in-text citations, double spacing, and Times New Roman 12-point font.
Appropriate Length	When I say 2-3 pages, I mean TWO FULL PAGES. I will take points off for the essay not reaching the required length.

Your Cause and Effect Mini-Essay will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

Evaluation Component	Point Value
Introduction	10 points
Thesis Statement	10 points
Supporting Evidence	40 points
Conclusion	10 points
Tone/Transitions/Grammar Punctuation Proficiency	5 points
Length (at least three FULL pages, NOT including Works Cited)	10 points
Works Cited (starts on separate page)	5 points
MLA Format	5 points
Peer Review Participation	5 points
Point Total	100 points

Figure 3
Persuasion Mini-Essay Prompt by Mack Curry IV

Persuasion Mini-Essay (10%, 100 points)

Due: No later than 9:20 am on Tuesday, February 19th, 2019

Submission Instructions: Assignments on Canvas

Introduction

For the next few classes, we will be looking at how to effectively add support to an argument. We will also discuss the top ten persuasive writing techniques while reviewing the three rhetorical appeals (ethos, pathos, and logos). These techniques and appeals work together to convince or persuade someone of someone else's viewpoint. The purpose of a supported argument essay is to make a strong case for or against something you have researched and feel strongly about.

Instructions

In a 2-3page (not including Works Cited) essay, argue a position for or against the use of AAVE in the classroom. Also, explain whether race and identity have any influence on your position.

Use rhetorical appeals, persuasive techniques, and AT LEAST two sources within your essay to provide support for your claim. This essay should include the following information:

Essay Component	Function
Introduction Paragraph	Describes your topic and leads to your opinion about it (purpose, audience, and context).
Thesis Statement	Clearly states your position for or against something. The thesis statement should also mention the main points (rationale) for your viewpoint. The thesis should be clear, easily identifiable, and close to the end of the introduction paragraph.
Body Paragraphs	Body paragraphs should contain supporting evidence for your thesis. The supporting evidence should be clear and detailed to accurately prove your points. Also, these paragraphs should start with topic sentences that set the tone for what information will be included in the remainder of the paragraph.
Conclusion Paragraph	Conclusion paragraphs restate your thesis statement. The conclusion paragraph should serve as a summary of what has already been stated, so no new information is allowed.
Works Cited page (starts on separate page from the essay)	A Works Cited page cites your research resources used to support your claims.

MLA Format	MLA format for the entire assignment (including the Works Cited page). This includes in-text citations, double spacing, and Times New Roman 12-point font.
Appropriate Length	When I say 2-3 pages, I mean two full pages. I will take points off your essay grade for not reaching the minimum length.

Your Persuasion Mini-Essay will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

Evaluation Component	Point Value
Introduction	10 points
Thesis Statement	10 points
Supporting Evidence	40 points
Conclusion	10 points
Tone/Transitions/Grammar Punctuation Proficiency	10 points
Length (at least three FULL pages, NOT including Works Cited)	10 points
Works Cited (starts on separate page)	5 points
MLA Format	5 points
Point Total	100 points

Figure 4
Soundscape Assignment Prompt

Weight: 15% of your overall grade

Instructions

1. Record a soundscape of people speaking in AAVE and SWE and other sounds heard in a specific location within the Atlanta area.
2. Analyze the rhetorical impact the sounds play in your judgement of the speaker.
3. Consider the impact mixing soundscapes can have on how a message is received.
4. Use your Cause-and-Effect and Persuasion essays to consider the positive and negative influences your soundscape can have on a listener.
5. Soundscapes should be created with Audacity or another approved platform generating platform.

Guidelines

1. You must describe every sound in the soundscape and the judgment attached to it.
2. A written explanation for your soundscape should be two to three pages long.
3. Assignment must use multimodal pedagogy to be considered for a grade.

Soundscape Assignment Evaluation

Category	Points
Tone, Grammar, and Flow	10 points
Impactful Content (Intro, thesis, support, and conclusion)	30 points
Code-Meshing AAVE and SWE (Both languages must be used.)	10 points
Appropriate Multimodal Platform (Audacity, Voice Memo, etc.)	15 points
Adequate Soundscape Recording (2-5 minutes)	15 points
Meeting Length Requirements	10 points
Works Cited	5 points
Peer Review	5 points
Total	100 points

Figure 5
Soundscape Assignment Reflection

On a scale of 1-5, how comfortable were you using AAVE in this assignment?

1) Not comfortable at all	2) Slightly comfortable	3) Half comfortable, half uncomfortable	4) Very comfortable	5) Extremely comfortable
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On a scale of 1-5, how comfortable were you using SWE in this assignment?

1) Not comfortable at all	2) Slightly comfortable	3) Half comfortable, half uncomfortable	4) Very comfortable	5) Extremely comfortable
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On a scale of 1-5, how comfortable were you with creating a soundscape?

1) Not comfortable at all	2) Slightly comfortable	3) Half comfortable, half uncomfortable	4) Very comfortable	5) Extremely comfortable
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On a scale of 1-5, how comfortable were with code-meshing in this assignment?

1) Not comfortable at all	2) Slightly comfortable	3) Half comfortable, half uncomfortable	4) Very comfortable	5) Extremely comfortable
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1) Not at all	2) I slightly understood it	3) Half understood, half misunderstood	4) Very well	5) Extremely well
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How well did you understand the instructional prompt for this assignment?

Write a brief paragraph explaining how what you learned about sonic rhetoric, code-meshing, AAVE, and SWE from this assignment.

Figure 6
Evaluation Mini-Essay Prompt by Mack Curry IV

Evaluation Mini-Essay (10%, 100 points)

Due: No later than 9:20am on Tuesday, April 9th, 2019

Submission Instructions: Assignments on Canvas

Introduction

For the past few weeks, we have been examining various strategies for going about evaluating and analyzing an image. We have discussed the importance of focusing on concepts such as *symbolism*, *inferences*, and *euphemisms* and how they align with the three rhetorical appeals (*ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*). These concepts all work together to ensure that a strong analysis can be paired with a legitimate argument for how you and others interpret the message of the desired image.

In a 2-3page (not including Works Cited) essay, evaluate the rhetorical impact a movie, song, or other form of media's language use has had on your viewpoint of home language, and identity. Also, be sure to provide rationale to other possible interpretations of the image. Lastly, include the image at the end of the essay.

Essay Component	Function
Introduction Paragraph (3-4 sentences)	Describes the image you have chosen to analyze, along with your interpretation or opinion of the image and its message.
Thesis Statement (1 sentence)	Provides a clear viewpoint of the image's intention. The thesis statement should also mention the main points (rationale) for your viewpoint. The thesis should be clear, easily identifiable, and preferably at the end of the introduction paragraph.
Body Paragraphs (4-5 sentences each)	Body paragraphs should contain supporting evidence for your thesis. The supporting evidence should be clear and detailed to accurately prove your points. Also, these paragraphs should start with topic sentences that set the tone for what information will be included in the remainder of the paragraph. Also, be sure to include discussion of rationale for opposing viewpoints in the final body paragraph.
Conclusion Paragraph (2-3 sentences)	Conclusion paragraphs restate your thesis statement. The conclusion paragraph should serve as a summary of what has already been stated, so no new information is allowed.
Works Cited page (starts on separate page from the essay)	A Works Cited page cites your research resources used to support your claims.

MLA Format	MLA format for the entire assignment (including the Works Cited page). This includes in-text citations, double spacing, and Times New Roman 12-point font.
Appropriate Length	When I say 3-5 pages, I mean TWO FULL PAGES. I will take points off your essay grade for not reaching the minimum length.

Your Evaluation Mini-Essay will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

Evaluation Component	Point Value
Introduction	10 points
Thesis Statement	10 points
Supporting Evidence	40 points
Conclusion	10 points
Tone/Transitions/Grammar Punctuation Proficiency	5 points
Length (at least three FULL pages, NOT including Works Cited)	10 points
Works Cited (starts on separate page)	5 points
MLA Format	5 points
Peer Review Participation	5 points
Point Total	100 points

Figure 7
Rhetorical Analysis Mini-Essay Prompt by Mack Curry IV

Rhetorical Analysis Mini- Essay (10%, 100 points)

Due: No later than 9:20am on Tuesday, April 23rd, 2018

Submission Instructions: Assignments on Canvas

Introduction: For the past few weeks, we have been learning how to write a Rhetorical Analysis essay. This type of essay involves paying close attention to language, sound, race, and identity.

Instructions: In a 2-3page (not including Works Cited) essay, write a Rhetorical Analysis about a remake or parody of your favorite song, poem, or other form of media. Your analysis should include a description of the literary piece, a position regarding the work's message, and discussion of the impact the altered form of media had on your perception of language, race, and identity.

Essay Component	Function
Introduction Paragraph	Provide background information about the literary piece. This information should lead into your thesis.
Thesis Statement	The thesis statement should mention your viewpoint on the literary piece's message and your rationale. The thesis should be clear, easily identifiable, and close to the end of the introduction paragraph.
Body Paragraphs	Body paragraphs should contain supporting evidence for your thesis. The supporting evidence should be clear and detailed to accurately prove your points. Also, these paragraphs should start with topic sentences that set the tone for what information will be included in the remainder of the paragraph.
Conclusion Paragraph	Conclusion paragraphs restate your thesis statement. The conclusion paragraph should serve as a summary of what has already been stated, so no new information is allowed.
Works Cited page (starts on separate page from the essay)	A Works Cited page cites your research resources used to support your claims.
MLA Format	MLA format for the entire assignment (including the Works Cited page). This includes in-text citations, double spacing, and Times New Roman 12-point font.
Appropriate Length	When I say 2-3 pages, I mean TWO FULL PAGES. I will take points off your essay grade for not reaching the minimum length.

Your Rhetorical Analysis Mini- Essay will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

Evaluation Component	Point Value
Introduction	10 points
Thesis Statement	10 points
Supporting Evidence	40 points
Conclusion	10 points
Tone/Transitions/Grammar Punctuation Proficiency	5 points
Length (at least three FULL pages, NOT including Works Cited)	10 points
Works Cited (starts on separate page)	5 points
MLA Format	5 points
Peer Review Participation	5 points
Point Total	100 points

Figure 8
Video Narrative Assignment

Weight: 30% of the overall grade

Instructions

1. Create a parody of a television show or a movie and use it to tell a story with AAVE with SWE.
2. Analyze the combined use of gestural, oral, and visual communication in your parody.
3. Review the rhetorical effect the combined communications modes have on how the image is received. Use your written essays and soundscape assignment as references.
- . Create an alternative to a written essay when completing your analysis. 5. Parodies should be created with Audacity and the GNU Image Manipulation Program (GIMP). Any outside platforms used must approved by me.

Guidelines

- . You must describe the parody: what was the original, what is the parody’s goal, and why is the parody’s message significant.
- . Parodies must be at least 3-5 minutes long.
- . A written explanation for your parody should be two to three pages long.
- Assignment must use multimodal pedagogy to be considered for a grade.

Video Parody Assignment Evaluation

Category	Points
Tone, Grammar, and Flow	10 points
Impactful Content (Intro, thesis, support, and conclusion)	30 points
Code-Meshing AAVE and SWE	10 points
Appropriate Multimodal Platform	15 points
Sufficient Written Essay Alternative	15 points
Meeting Length Requirements	10 points
Works Cited	10 points
Total	100 points

Figure 9
Video Narrative Assignment Reflection

On a scale of 1-5, how comfortable were you using AAVE in this assignment?

1) Not comfortable at all	2) Slightly comfortable	3) Half comfortable, half uncomfortable	4) Very comfortable	5) Extremely comfortable
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On a scale of 1-5, how comfortable were you using SWE in this assignment?

1) Not comfortable at all	2) Slightly comfortable	3) Half comfortable, half uncomfortable	4) Very comfortable	5) Extremely comfortable
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On a scale of 1-5, how comfortable were you with creating a video parody?

1) Not comfortable at all	2) Slightly comfortable	3) Half comfortable, half uncomfortable	4) Very comfortable	5) Extremely comfortable
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On a scale of 1-5, how comfortable were with code-meshing in this assignment?

1) Not comfortable at all	3) Slightly comfortable	4) Half comfortable, half uncomfortable	5) Very comfortable	6) Extremely comfortable
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How well did you understand the instructional prompt for this assignment?

1) Not at all	2) I slightly understood it	3) Half understood, half misunderstood	4) Very well	5) Extremely well
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Write a brief paragraph explaining how what you learned about remix pedagogy, code-meshing, AAVE, and SWE from this assignment.

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