

# Linguistic and cultural diversity essays example

[Profession](#), [Student](#)



The development of English literacy instructional programs has provided teachers the opportunity to inculcate ‘English Literacy Learners (ELLs)’ with appropriate strategic models. Literacy instructional models now embrace an appreciation for cultural diversity. In terms of linguistic variety brought to schools, the concept engages learners to excel in reading, writing, and generally to grasp an appreciation for language diversity in literacy. John McWhorter explains that “growing up in America” advances the notion that any English dialect veering away from the so-called ‘good’ English spoken on TV news programs represents “evidence of grungy mitts” leaving filthy prints on the sanitized “formica of standard English” (ix). The point locates a juncture in which teachers now must strive to learn all they can, and as they teach, absorb useful techniques to establish the best strategies in linguistic varieties that enrich a culturally apt approach for literacy instruction. This discourse exam focuses on three areas: (a) Linguistic and Cultural Diversity, (b) Appreciation of Linguistic Diversity, and (c) Reading and Writing Instruction of English Language Learners (ELLs).

The basic tasks of this section seeks to compare or contrast some phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic aspects of standardized (and vernacular) English dialects. Additionally, some differences in the aspects of these elements between two languages other than English is described. Some phonological comparisons between aspects of standardized versus vernacular dialects of English are as follows. The sound systems of phonology enables the organization of sound systems, while morphological elements (affixes in terms of prefixes or suffixes) in ways that may compare or distinguish their usages in standard English or its cousin of vernacular

dialects. One example renders a standardized statement, and pronunciation of a person saying: “ I am going to the store.” One frame of vernacular speech in English may proclaim: “ I am goin’ to the ‘ stow.’ The meanings are the same, and easily understood by all speech in the English language.

Obviously, the sound differs yet the semantics are identical. In other words, both sentence patterns are easily understood in terms of their meaning. John Barnitz views the “ linguistically diverse” classroom communities of today, as forums of learning that lead teachers to “ make use of a perhaps unexpected abundance” learners contribute to the situation (586). The idea herein highlights a sociolinguistic inclusion and awareness prescribing teacher encouragement to engage in what Barnitz refers to as ‘ culturally authentic talk’ that enhances the learning experience – for all participants.

Another exemplary sentence pattern comparison placing phonological and morphological contrast on display is found as follows. According to Carolyn Temple Adgar and Walt Wolfram that “ a U. S. president once said in a nationally televised address that ‘ Washington ain’t seen nothin’ yet!’” (14).

The standardized form of the sentence would alternately exclaim:

Washington hasn’t seen anything yet! Adgar and Wolfram explain that his usage did not reflect his inability to speak Standard English, but rather sought to deliver a sense of boldness, “ toughness and resiliency” oftentimes believed to characterize how “ vernacular dialect” serves “ important communication function(s)” (14). Since language is constantly in flux as a living format for human expression, it is imperative that literacy instructors of ELLs stay abreast of developments, for example, provided by an interaction with TESOL professionals in order to share an exchange of

progressive ideas to advance correlated knowledge in the field.

The popularity of Michael Jackson certainly has been instilled in everyone's mind today. One standardized English aspect concerns a comparison and contrast of: (a) I'm bad. The alternate vernacular states: (b) I'm bad.

Although the linguistic phonology, morphology, and syntactical structure are identical – the semantics are different. The first example in (a) assumes the person speaking refers to himself, or herself, as a malicious or unworthy person, unpleasant that perhaps connotes shame. The second proclamation in (b) represents an egotistical pride that actually means “ I'm good” or even superior, proper, even ‘ great’ so shut-up and get “ out my face” is the message. The factor holds a uniquely diverse and culturally driven format, by its introduction into American societal English (and even global English), by which people came to understand a re-invention of oral language in the scheme of a ‘ living’ linguistics of literacy – if you will. Beyond the aspects of some of these phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic comparisons the same elements may reflect the following contrasts and differences when cultural diversity and linguistic development persists.

An excellent and informative lecture given by the authors of ‘ Teaching Reading to English Language Learners: Insights from Linguistics’ Kristin Lems, Leah Miller, and Tenena Soro outlined and processed a wonderful lesson on linguistics learning in English. The filmed discourse involved Miller giving examples of ‘ back-formation’ that shows how nouns have been transformed to verbs. The authors engagingly delivered examples of processes involving linguistic phenomena of category shift, and scale change. Soro discussed the category shift of an adjective to a verb, as an

innovation, citing the words: google and butter. A google search, portrays the adjective form; Google it, portrays the verb form in an imperative style. Also, Soro noted that a “ smoothie” could not work with mashed potatoes because smooth is an adjective, whereas potato is a noun. In terms of scale change, Dr. Soro demonstrably performed how English elements of phonological, morphological, syntactical, and semantics interacted with such cultural diversity changes. In the area of morphology Soro drew attention to prefixes, and suffixes of additions to a word base:

- Droplet
- Megamall
- Hankie
- Novella
- Supersize
- Micromanage
- Nanosecond
- Sermonette, and more (“ Teaching Reading to English Language Learners – National-Louis University”).

Plenty of laughter occurred when Soro introduced a scattering of words (and phrases) on the screen, one of which was ‘ my junk.’ Soro indicated that he had just “ learned” that phrase the same day of the taping of the lecture. Amidst the chuckles, the linguist also noted “ Smoothie, that’s an interesting one,” and “ What happens with ‘ smoothies?’ noticing an adjective-to-noun transition” (“ Teaching Reading to English Language Learners – National-Louis University”).

Differences in these elements in other languages, such as French and

Spanish bear on distinguishing factors. French has been generally described as a series of ‘grunts and groans’ to the English-speaking ear. The recent phenomena of the ‘Spanglish’ language has been noted. The usage of ‘el’ as an article in Spanish derives from the Arabic language, as an earlier influence from Spain. Chappell and Faltis emphasize the importance of teacher literacy instructors participating in “contemporary contexts of teaching emergent bilingual youth,” adding the prediction that “15 million students” with “Limited English Proficiency” will be enrolled in U. S. schools by 2016 (5). The conversation now turns attention to the second section.

## **Appreciation of Linguistic Diversity**

Rather than fearing language diversity, and the fact that students speak a myriad of languages nationally in American homes, literacy instructors must expand an appreciation for the richness of the diverse linguistic topography. Difference is not the teacher’s enemy, but an asset to embrace by discarding the ‘deficit’ view of diversity as inadequate. Several reasons indicate why ‘differences’ promise increased enhancement. In the close relative to, and ancient predecessor of, English McWhorter observes that language moves and changes, noting that the 1000 A. D. version of ‘our father’ (from the prayer, which art in heaven) was quite different. McWhorter states “How is it that we get from something like *fœder ūre* to our father? First of all, the meaning of even basic words is always gradually changing” (2). In ‘The Story of Human Language’ John McWhorter describes how a “first language” can become “6, 000 because processes of language change can take place in many directions, explainable rather than predictable” (27). McWhorter discusses how each offshoot group changes and splits, re-forming its own

grammatical structures, syntax, morphological, and so on.

Dialects represent differences of enhancement, as opposed to deficit views of inadequacy, because for one thing the purpose of language is to communicate effectively – through speech or the written word. Such mixtures and linguistic offshoots, according to McWhorter merely reflect how “ The nonstandard dialect and the standard one often coexist in a structured relationship in a society” (17). Thus, diglossia is common globally. Although sometimes vocabulary or meanings can become flawed in confusion, Adgar and Wolfram suggest “ no one linguistic system can be shown to be inherently better” simply because apparently there is no adequate qualitative measure to assert which “ particular dialect is associated with an inherent deficit or advantage” (18). See the concept?

In the case for cultivating an appreciation of linguistic diversity, in the realm of adopting and developing cogent cultural strategies for literacy instruction, Chappell and Faltis have much to say. They note that from the 1960s into the 21st century second-language acquisition was theorized to occur inside a ‘ box.’ Chappell and Faltis imply that English Language Learners fall through the gaps when immersed in ‘ English-only’ classrooms of instruction because the “ program model demands that” they “ acquire vocabulary and grammar in isolation” (14). It could be argued that not even first language is acquired in a vacuum. Furthermore a great reason to advance the promising effects of celebrating, recognizing, and teaching to multicultural differences (in the sense of inclusion into a literacy program development) is they each student’s life experience is unique. Each student holds unique qualities and gifts that others can learn from, including the instructor. Home situations

inventory various socio-economic class structure disparities.

Adgar and Wolfram note some of the linguistic instructional concerns. In looking at a study conducted by Heath (1983) the researchers state “ In a classic study of three communities – working-class White, working-class African American, and middle-class townspeople” difficulties were faced by both sets of working-class students which had to do with “ differences between the school and home communities” (21). At the time of their book’s writing, *Dialects in Schools and Communities*, Adgar and Wolfram reported three styles for coping with multi-dialects in the classroom as: “ accommodate all dialects, require that a dialect of Standard English be learned and used, or identify a position somewhere between these two” (21). This observer thinks we can do better. The concept of integrating reading, writing, and literacy acquisition from the approach of linguistic instructors placing value on the individuality of how each student “ brings to the encounter his or her own patterns of discourse” is a win-win manner of involving home-life communities into the process (Barnitz, 1994, 586). At this point, the attention of the paper targets the third and final section.

## **Reading and Writing Instruction of English Language Learners**

The scope of this section deals with how teachers can arrive at an understanding of linguistic and cultural diversity in order to facilitate several distinctive roles, or goals. They are: (a) Oral Language and Oral Reading Fluency, (b) Reading Comprehension of Culturally Diverse Texts, and (c) Oral and Written Culturally Diverse Discourse Communication.



## **Oral Language and Oral Reading Fluency**

Oral language and reading fluency support the heart and soul of literacy.

Audible hearing of words, sounds, within the trajectory of a language acquisition thrust, the connection is crucial. In terms of encouraging greater success within the diverse cultural setting in consideration of reading aloud to gain proficiency in reading fluency, for example (given the grade level appropriateness) students could read *Don Quixote*, in English and Spanish, or *Like Water for Chocolate* in the same manner. Although outstanding literature knows no bounds, African American children may especially enjoy some works by Toni Morrison – such as *A Mercy*. Oral language is so key apparently to the enjoyment of literacy, and learning of linguistic skills that publishers have long since placed audible books on the shelves. In terms of oral language facilitating reading fluency Lems, Miller, and Soro have much to say on the subject. The researchers keenly recognize that phonics and decodable words aspects are vital, due to how they match up to “phonemes and graphemes” (Lems, Miller, & Soro, 2010, 65). Thus, the concept of decoding aptly and obviously applies. While the sight words rely upon a visual memorization factor, phonics knowledge can connect cognitive learning in essential ways when engagement in oral reading fluency is stimulated.

A main idea Lems, Miller, and Soro also bring to the table a commentary on how “oral code in both directions” combines with spelling and reading to enhance mastery (88).

## **Reading Comprehension of Culturally Diverse Texts**

The aforementioned example of reading texts, in both languages, helps to develop better reading comprehension. The reading comprehension aspects of students' ability to comprehensively digest the material depends upon their having access to the material, and being positively encouraged by their instructors to grasp improvement. One way to involve students to excel in gaining higher levels of reading comprehension in the context of perusal of culturally diverse texts, is to allow usage of the arts in the classroom. The method of exposure to the arts is of particular value, according to Chappell and Faltis, who recommend " Teachers who use the arts to engage emergent bilingual youth for purposes of critical consciousness development and conspiratorial affinity are much more than arts educators" (14). Such intervention reading comprehension techniques can combine culturally diverse texts, for example when students attend a theatrical stage play, or a music concert performance. Use the media and technology, to ' virtually' attend such performances, and perhaps engage an exciting interview with an author via Skype. Be creative, have fun, utilize unconventional ways that adequately adhere to the curriculum rubric and you may be surprised that the literacy taught can change the course of a student's life – for the better.

## **Oral and Written Culturally Diverse Discourse Communication**

Tying together written and oral discourse communication cannot be stressed enough. Reading and writing go together. As basic and simplistic as this may appear, linguists assigned to use the discourse to communicate a valid connection between oral and written skills will always raise the level of

performance of their ELLs students. Engagement of a variety of dialects, cultural contexts, media, and authentic textual meanings will present an advantageous road to success in teaching culturally and linguistically diverse learners.

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