

Infusing Culturally Responsive Instruction into Daily Teaching

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At times, effective teaching involves some form of differentiation. A less thought of but very effective form of differentiation is culturally and linguistically responsive instruction (CRI). Instructional modifications that are responsive to students' learning needs culturally and linguistically can make substantive differences in achievement.

Defining Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Instruction

Geneva Gay, in Culturally Responsive Teaching – Theory Practice, and Pedagogy (2000), defines culturally responsive pedagogy as the use of cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them. It teaches *to and through* the strengths of these students. It is culturally validating and affirming. More simply, culturally and linguistically responsive instruction validates and affirms the home language and culture of students through the use of responsive instructional strategies, which act as bridges or enablers to acceptance, achievement, and empowerment in academic settings and mainstream culture at large. To validate means to make legitimate the cultural and linguistic elements of cultural groups who have been historically discriminated against and denied equal access in American institutions. To affirm means to make positive images, mores, and traditions, which have been made negative and stereotyped through mainstream media and other sources of information. CRI provides a pedagogy for achievement with students who are underserved by the traditional public school as well as enhances learning for students who have experienced success in the system.

Benefits of Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Instruction

A survey of almost any recent or past standardized data gives a clear picture of who is achieving and who is not achieving in American education. In this context, culturally and linguistically responsive teaching would most benefit the students whom are not only underachieving, behind two or more grade levels, but who are underperforming, not performing at their highest potential due to lack of motivation and/or disengagement. According to Barbara Shade (1997), the benefits of CRI are as follows:

- Students are consistently affirmed in their cultural connections through instruction and environment
- Students are reinforced for academic development
- Classroom interactions stress collectivity rather than individuality
- Students see the classroom as theirs, a place of learning that is physically inviting
- Diversity is celebrated in authentic ways daily

The Importance of Language Affirmation and Acceptance

In addition to cultural commonalities, many of the students who are underserved share a linguistic history. Termed Standard English Learners or SELs (LeMoine, 1998), these students come from homes where their home language differs enough from Standard English and Academic English in the following ways – phonologically, morpho-syntactically, syntactically, semantically, pragmatically, and rhetorically. Commonly known linguistically as non-standard languages, African American Vernacular, Chicano English, Hawaiian Pidgin English, and Native American dialects represent the languages of many underserved students. Superficially, these students have an apparent proficiency in Standard English and Academic English, but a critical examination of their reading and written skills coupled with the demand of school language paints a different picture. The students are many times seen as language deficit, not language different, and are skipped over in terms of their linguistic needs. They are discounted as behind, below, remedial, or special education. Using Specially Designed Instruction in Academic English (SDAIE) and Mainstream English Language Development (MELD) can be linguistically responsive teaching and lead to achievement difference.

Acknowledging and Affirming Non-Standard Languages

In general, the development of non-standard languages in America is best explained through a linguistic process call relexification. Relexification is the overlaying of one language's vocabulary or surface structure on top of the grammatical base or deep structure of another language. One of the more well-known relexified languages is Yiddish. Some linguists believe that these non-standard languages, Hawaiian Pidgin English, Chicano English, Native American Dialects, and African American Vernacular English (AAVE) may have developed in a similar way.

Specifically when it comes to AAVE, its a direct derivation of the linguistic structure of West African languages, according to some linguists. There are three linguistic axioms that accompany the evolution of AAVE and the other non-standard languages.

1. All language forms or linguistic entities are valid. There is no such thing as a bad language.
2. Linguistic entities are rule-governed and predictable to a large extent
3. We acquire the language that is spoken by the primary caregivers in the home beginning from birth to the time we enter school

Thus, AAVE speaking students, as well as other speakers of non-standard language varieties, come to school “language different or diverse,” not language deficient. That is, they come to school speaking in a way that is different from the languages of instruction, which are Standard English and Academic English.

Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Instruction in the Classroom

CRI impacts all facets of instruction through the use of five umbrella strands. Under each strand falls a litany of strategies and activities that can

be infused into teaching daily. The five instructional strands with descriptive elements are explained below:

1. Standards Based Teaching Using Culturally Relevant Literature
 - Purposefully utilizing texts that affirm and validate the backgrounds, cultures, languages, and experiences of the students
 - Utilization of effective literacy and language strategies made culturally responsive
2. Systematic Teaching of Situational Appropriateness in Language
 - Building understanding and awareness of the linguistic structures of Standard English as differentiated from the home language
 - Encouraging students to accept and to appreciate the value of code-switching linguistically without losing their identities
3. Building on Cultural Behaviors For A Positive Classroom Community
 - Engaging the students in rigorous activities, which tap into the personal learning styles
 - Providing a litany of protocols for discussion and participation that facilitate the validation and affirmation of cultural behaviors in the classroom and the teaching of situational appropriateness
4. Expanding Academic Vocabulary Through Conceptually Coded Words
 - Validating the knowledge base and home vocabulary of students
 - Linking cultural concepts to academic words and
 - Applying understanding of synonyms/antonyms
5. Creating a Validating and Affirming Learning Environment
 - Accepting, affirmative, risk-free classroom environment
 - Including in the room environment images that are reflective of students' cultures from the instructional texts and materials to the instructional activities, from the classroom walls, to the classroom library

Picture this. A classroom full of students. A tapestry of the cultural and linguistic identities of America. Instruction that meets the needs of each student responsively, in a way that is validating and affirming. Meets the needs of the successful students. Meets the needs of students who are not as successful. The picture is culturally and linguistically responsive instruction.

References

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AAVE

African American Vernacular English in the Classroom

To effectively address AAVE in the classroom, the first and most important step for the teacher is to acknowledge the student's use of home language or AAVE as "language different, not language deficit." To accomplish this, a teacher replaces deficit terminology and phrases such as *correct*, *fix*, *make better*, *proper*, or *say it right* with affirming language such as *translate*, *code-switch*, *put it in another way*, or *say it for an academic audience*. The second step involves modifying the instruction, focusing on an established technique for second-language instruction called contrastive analysis. With this methodology, teachers have students focus on the rules of the target language through the lens of their home language. The process for doing so is outlined below:

- 1. Pre-assessment:** Determine the students' needs for instruction regarding a particular linguistic feature. Use both formal and informal assessments. Listen to students talk; read their writing. In addition, assess the degree to which a student uses a particular linguistic feature. Not all Standard English Learners (SELs) use all Home Language features.
- 2. Introduce the AAVE linguistic rule:** For example, explain that multiple negation is the use of multiple negative words in a sentence. The more negative intensifiers in a sentence, the greater the negative sentiment being expressed.
- 3. Identify the use of the rule with authentic samples:** For example, explain that "The statement *We don't never have no homework on Friday.*" is an example of multiple negation because it contains more than one negative word.
- 4. Distinguish between AAVE and the target language:** Give as the SE equivalent *We don't normally have any homework on Friday.* and point out that in Standard English, usage requires one negative word and use of intensifiers (adjectives and adverbs).
- 5. Explicitly teach the code switch:** Explain that *We don't never have no homework on Friday.* = *We don't normally have any homework on Friday.* Point out that Standard English intensifiers *normally* and *any* accurately translate the use of the three negatives in the Home Language sentence.
- 6. Address the issue of situational appropriateness:** Emphasize that Standard English is required in many contexts, such as schoolwork, job interviews, and so on.
- 7. Assessment:** Assess students to determine their ability to 1) accurately identify the use of AAVE rules, 2) differentiate between home and school language, and 3) code-switch between the two.

AAVE Linguistic Contrastive Analysis Chart

PHONICS	MARKERS	GRAMMAR	VOCABULARY
<p>Digraph /th/</p> <p>There is no /th/, similar to French as well as other languages.</p> <p>Examples AAVE: <i>dat</i> SE: <i>that</i> AAVE: <i>mouf</i> SE: <i>mouth</i></p>	<p>Past Tense Marker /ed/</p> <p>Markers, such as verb tense, are sometimes indicated by tonality versus a use of a morpheme in Standard English.</p> <p>Examples AAVE: <i>cook yesterday</i> SE: <i>cooked</i> AAVE: <i>move last night</i> SE: <i>moved</i></p>	<p>Regularization “Hypercorrection” or over-generalizing of the rule linked to the irregular patterns of Standard English with number agreement and subject/objective pronouns</p> <p>Subject verb agreement Examples AAVE: <i>She walk home sometimes</i> SE: <i>She walks home sometimes</i></p> <p>Reflexive pronoun AAVE: <i>hisself</i> (<i>subject pronoun is regularized object pronoun as well</i>) SE: <i>himself</i></p>	<p>Culturally Specific Static Vocabulary</p> <p>Vocabulary specific to the community that is passed down generation to generation</p> <p>Terms like: <i>kitchen</i> (back of the hair) or <i>tripping</i> (being bothersome)</p>
<p>Same Voicing Consonant Clusters</p> <p>Voiced Clusters <i>ld, nd, ng</i></p> <p>Unvoiced Clusters <i>sk, st, ft, kt</i></p> <p>Examples AAVE: <i>col</i> SE: <i>cold</i> AAVE: <i>des</i> SE: <i>desk</i></p>	<p>Possessive Marker</p> <p>Possession marked by location of possessor and intonation of word when verbalized</p> <p>Examples AAVE: <i>Bobby toy</i> SE: <i>Bobby's toy</i></p>	<p>Use of Be Habitual Be</p> <p>The <i>be</i> form is durative, referring to an ongoing state.</p> <p>Examples AAVE: <i>I be talking with them</i> SE: <i>I often talk with them.</i></p>	<p>Dynamic Uses of Slang</p> <p>Vocabulary of the youth that changes frequently and can be tied to one specific generation</p> <p>Note: terms for money based on the decade 70s—bread 80s—mula 90s—benjimans 2000—cheddar</p>
<p>Vowel Pairs /V /v/</p> <p>Mixing of short and long vowels</p> <p>Examples AAVE: <i>Ah</i> SE: <i>I</i> AAVE: <i>Thank</i> SE: <i>Think</i></p>	<p>Plural Marker</p> <p>Unnecessary when numerically defined</p> <p>Examples AAVE: <i>fifty cent</i> SE: <i>fifty cents</i></p>	<p>Topicalization</p> <p>Subject announced or “topicalized”.</p> <p>Examples AAVE: <i>That teacher she mean.</i> SE: <i>That teacher is mean</i></p>	
<p>Reflexive R and L</p> <p>R and L before controlled vowels that do not appear; same occurrence in Asian languages</p> <p>Examples AAVE: <i>Sista', Motha</i> SE: <i>Sister, mother</i> AAVE: <i>mi'ion, ye'ow</i> SE: <i>million, yellow</i></p>	<p>Negation</p> <p>Uses of multiple negatives to intensify negative in sentences; not equivalent to double negative in Standard English</p> <p>Examples AAVE: <i>Don't never do that more.'</i> SE: <i>Don't do that anymore.</i></p>	<p>Is/Are Form</p> <p><i>Is/Are</i> linking verbs and helping verbs not always necessary</p> <p>Examples AAVE: <i>She going to the game with us.</i> SE: <i>She is going to the game with us.</i></p>	
<p>Two Syllable Stress Patterns</p> <p>Examples Po-lice Ho-tel</p>			

