Introduction

The label “Critical Language Awareness” (CLA) has been applied both to the understanding of how language is imbued with social meaning and power relations, as well as to pedagogical approaches designed to promote that understanding among students. As part of their learning about how language works, CLA-based pedagogies encourage students to question taken-for-granted assumptions about language and to analyze how such assumptions are tied to inequality and injustice, with the ultimate goal of promoting positive social change.

One central component of CLA-oriented pedagogical proposals is the examination of language variation and the reasons and mechanisms by which certain varieties—those associated with low socioeconomic status or racialized speakers—are stigmatized, as well as the sociopolitical implications of such stigmatization. In the US, the CLA framework was first put forward as an educational model for speakers of stigmatized varieties of English, especially African American Vernacular English (AAVE). CLA is clearly also relevant for speakers of Spanish and Latinxs in both English as a Second Language and mainstream classes, given the widespread circulation of negative discourses surrounding Spanish and the stigmatization of varieties of English that show signs of Spanish contact. More recently, CLA has been proposed as a framework for the design of Spanish as a heritage language (SHL) education, which is the primary focus of this chapter.

Advocates of critical approaches to SHL note that not only is Spanish disparaged, but societal hierarchies typically portray the specific language varieties and translingual practices utilized by many US Latinxs as “incorrect” or “impure.” Arguing that education is a key site where linguistic normativity and social inequality are reproduced, CLA-based pedagogies reject traditional pedagogy’s primary focus on individual students’ acquisition of “standard” Spanish’ and academic registers. Instead, they seek to promote students’ understanding of the social, political
and ideological dimensions of language as a means to promote students’ agency in making linguistic choices with the broader goal of challenging linguistic subordination and promoting social justice both inside and outside the school setting.

**Historical perspectives and theoretical framework**

**Critical pedagogy**

CLA has its roots in the interrelated projects of critical pedagogy (e.g., Freire 1970; Giroux 1983), critical discourse analysis (e.g., Fairclough 2001; Wodak 1999), and new literacy studies (e.g., Gee 1996, 1998). Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educator generally credited with the development of critical pedagogy, challenged traditional models that framed education as a process of one-way transmission of knowledge from teachers to students. Such approaches not only inhibit student creativity, they also reproduce social inequality by disempowering learners and downplaying their role in the educational process. Drawing from his literacy work with Brazilian peasants, Freire called for a more dialogic approach to education, one that stresses the incorporation of students’ experiences as well as the promotion of students’ coming to critical consciousness (or “conscientização,” to use Freire’s term) regarding those experiences. For Freire, the goal of education was not simply to provide marginalized or oppressed students with new knowledge or skills. Instead, he aimed for students to see the relationship of their individual circumstances to structural inequality and systemic injustice, with the objective of not only improving individual student’s situations but also promoting social justice through societal transformation.

Rather than a specific curricular program or teaching model, critical pedagogy is best seen as a general approach to educational research and practice that encompasses numerous analytical frameworks and educational proposals. In the US, formulations of critical pedagogy include anti-racist pedagogy, border pedagogy (Giroux 1991), engaged pedagogy (hooks 1994), and the pedagogy of possibility (McLaren 1999), among others. One focus of scholars and activists working in these and other critical paradigms is to investigate the ways that mainstream educational policies, curricula, and practices reflect and reinforce racial, gender, class-based and other types of inequities. Among other issues, critical policy-oriented research has analyzed school funding mechanisms that rely on real estate taxes and which thus result in greater availability of educational resources in affluent communities; standardized testing and punitive teacher and school evaluation regimes, which disadvantage schools in low income areas; and publicly funded vouchers and charter schools, which lead to urban public schools that are ever more segregated by class, race and academic performance (Darling-Hammond 2010; Ravitch 2013). Critical research on school curricula and teaching practices has documented the elevation of White heterosexual middle-class norms and values and the concomitant erasure or denigration of other ways of being or understanding the world (hooks 1994). In the eyes of critical scholars, mainstream educational systems also perpetuate inequality by reproducing the myth of an egalitarian democratic society and promoting students’ unquestioning acceptance of the status quo, thus allowing power to remain concentrated in the hands of the few.

A second component of critical pedagogy, in addition to the analysis and critique of macro-level policies and practices, is the proposal of alternative educational approaches. In contrast with mainstream education that is oriented towards socializing students into dominant cultural and economic systems and social hierarchies, critical pedagogy seeks to engage students in analyzing such hierarchies and in questioning taken-for-granted understandings.
of the world. Crucially, the objectives of engagement are not limited to students’ individual intellectual and emotional development. Instead, students’ development of critical consciousness is meant to challenge the “manufacture of consent,” or the manipulation of the populace into accepting social and political structures and practices that benefit corporate and state interests (Giroux 2000; Macedo 1994). Further, critical educators aim to prepare students to resist existing hierarchies and fight discrimination and thus contribute to creating a more just and democratic society.

For Spanish-speaking and Latinx children, English-only education and the concomitant failure to recognize and value children’s home languages and experiences constitute symbolic violence as well as educational malpractice, given the well-documented educational benefits of bilingual and mother tongue schooling (e.g., Carreiras 2007; Darder 1991; Gándara 2012; Macedo 1997; Nieto 2009; Valenzuela 1999). In addition, prioritizing English language acquisition at the expense of subject matter content and segregating emergent bilinguals in programs such as Structured English Immersion limit students’ opportunities and academic development (Gándara 2012). Given the hegemony of English, and of English-only schooling, most critical pedagogical work focusing on language-related issues for Latinxs in primary schooling has focused on the subordination of Spanish and Spanish-speakers, rather than on sociopolitical issues related to linguistic variation within Spanish.

Because Spanish as a “foreign language” courses are concentrated in the secondary and post-secondary contexts, it is here where there is a longer tradition of critical scholarship regarding the treatment of variation within Spanish (e.g., Faltis 1990; Sánchez 1981). Building on both critical pedagogy and contributions from variationist sociolinguistics that stressed the validity of all languages and language varieties, this early work critically interrogated hierarchies that elevated European and “standard” varieties of Spanish and subordinated linguistic varieties and practices associated with Spanish as spoken in the US. Importantly, such scholarship stressed the need to explore the sociopolitical and cultural impact of these hierarchies and the teaching practices that rested on them. However, to a large extent, these critical conversations were designed for in-service and pre-service educators and were not envisioned as part of the SHL curriculum per se, although Sánchez’s (1981) and Aparicio’s (1997) proposals constitute important exceptions. This body of work provides an important foundation from which CLA in SHL has drawn.

Critical discourse analysis and new literacy studies

Like critical pedagogy, critical discourse analysis and new literacy studies draw from cultural and social theory and emphasize the ways in which language and language practices are tied up with issues of power and social control (Chilton 2012). Critical discourse analysis involves both the micro-level analysis of the linguistic elements contained within discourse, as well as the examination of their connection to the broader sociohistorical and ideological contexts in which they are situated. The two primary domains for critical discourse analysis are 1) how power is exercised in interactions, such as through the selective licensing of turn-taking or control of the topics discussed, and 2) how social categories, power relations and ideologies are constituted and reproduced via language (Pennycook 2001). For example, researchers have looked at how the use of particular pronouns such as “we” and “they” interpellate readers into mutually exclusive groups. In both domains, critical discourse analysts examine how particular viewpoints are implicitly reproduced in seemingly neutral language, with the goal of promoting social change via political engagement and the implementation of less discriminatory communicative practices and policies.
New literacy studies also emphasize the socially situated nature of language and literacy practices, and researchers working within this framework have examined the rich and varied kinds of literacy practices (e.g., story-telling, rapping, etc.) and ways of engaging with literacy that can be found in various cultural and social groups. Stressing that different kinds of literacy are valued in different cultural contexts, these scholars argue that literacy practices that deviate from those rewarded by mainstream schools should be considered “different” rather than “deficient” (Alim 2005). In addition to examinations of the literacy practices of different groups, scholarship in new literacy studies also encourages the design of educational programs that seek to validate a wide range of literacy practices while also attempting to build bridges to school-based literacy.

The development of CLA

Many critical approaches to language education draw from both new literacy studies as well as critical discourse analysis. Nonetheless, CLA is often seen as “the pedagogical wing of critical discourse analysis,” given the prominence of Norman Fairclough and his colleagues in both critical discourse analysis and CLA (Pennycook 2001: 94). In his work from the 1980s and 1990s, Fairclough argued that because power and social control are increasingly exercised implicitly through routine social practices, language plays a more central role in sustaining inequality (Fairclough 1992a, 2001). At the same time, the transition from manufacturing-based economies to economies based on the service sector resulted in greater emphasis on “communication skills” in the workplace, and an intensified effort to frame education as training in “effective” and “professional” language practices (Fairclough 1992a; see also Cameron 2000). Thus, the emergence of CLA can be understood in part as an attempt to expose and resist discriminatory linguistic and literacy practices in schools, offer a less skills-oriented view of education, and promote critical language-related consciousness among students, particularly marginalized students.

Another motivation in the development of CLA was the desire to offer a critical pedagogical alternative to the “language awareness” (LA) education then being advocated in the United Kingdom (Fairclough 1992a). LA was designed to improve the educational outcomes of speakers of “non-standard” varieties of English (as well as to improve foreign language learning) by including lessons on language variation. CLA goes beyond LA by incorporating critical discourse analysis understandings of the relationship of language to power and by seeking to challenge systemic inequality. So while both LA and CLA frame education as a way to address language-related social problems, they are premised on very different understandings of the source of those problems as well as how education might address them. Specifically, LA sees schools’ role as helping children overcome perceived shortcomings in their linguistic background, such as a lack of access to “standard English” or “verbal learning tools” (Fairclough 1992a: 13). In contrast, CLA rejects the notion that children are linguistically deficient, and argues that framing them as such is one way that educational institutions reproduce the social order. Thus, whereas LA is centred around (1) providing students with linguistic analytic tools to facilitate the acquisition of standard English and (2) combating prejudice directed towards so-called non-standard varieties (without addressing the reasons for such prejudice or its connection to social and political power) (Fairclough 1992a), CLA helps students understand how language prejudice is intertwined with broader social hierarchies and power relations. Further, it seeks to promote students’ development of critical resources for resisting and challenging those hierarchies. As we will see, this distinction between language awareness pedagogy’s emphasis on acquiring prestige norms and CLA’s focus on questioning the status quo is crucial for understanding CLA proposals in SHL.
Critical issues and topics

Bilingualism, bidialectalism and the expansion of linguistic repertoires

As noted earlier, scholarship in bilingual education has consistently demonstrated the affective and academic value of first language development and literacy. Based on such research, educational scholars have argued that schools should not seek to replace minority language students’ home language(s) with English, but rather to promote additive bilingualism and biliteracy. Along the same lines, and grounded in sociolinguistic research affirming the naturalness of linguistic variation and equal legitimacy of all varieties, there is a well-established body of pedagogical research advocating ‘bidialectalism’ for speakers of ‘non-standard’ varieties of English, such as AAVE and Hawaiian Creole English. Such approaches to language education call for the acquisition of standard English as an addition to students’ linguistic repertoires, rather than as a replacement of non-standard varieties (e.g., Delpit 1995; Nieto 2009; Rickford 2012). However, some additive models have been critiqued for paying lip service to bidialectalism while in practice focusing exclusively on the standard variety and thus inadvertently reinforcing the notion that the non-standard forms are uninteresting, illegitimate or inherently inferior (Leeman 2005; Rickford 2012).

Scholars seeking to improve Spanish language education for native and heritage speakers have made similar arguments regarding bidialectalism and the importance of legitimizing students’ home varieties of Spanish. For example, Valdés’ (1981) ground-breaking research called for SHL, then typically referred to as “Spanish for Bilinguals” (Valdés 1995), to adopt a language arts curriculum, with the aim of promoting the expansion of students’ linguistic repertoires rather than the eradication of nonstandard varieties. In addition to promoting the acquisition of a prestige variety, additive approaches generally also seek to expand SHL students’ sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence through mastery of a broader range of linguistic registers (Valdés 1995). The additive expansion-oriented approach is now a dominant paradigm within SHL.

In contrast with non-critical expansion-oriented approaches, CLA seeks to include students’ home varieties within the classroom and to pay greater attention to social and political aspects of language and language variation. However, this does not mean that critical educators oppose the expansion of students’ repertoires or reject the discussion of linguistic form. On the contrary, Fairclough (1992b) states that the acquisition of the standard variety can have utility for speakers of other varieties, while Villa (2003) follows Gee (1998) in arguing that students’ home language varieties and practices should serve as the starting point for the acquisition of additional discourses and knowledges. Further, various critical educators have suggested that a failure to provide access to standard varieties disadvantages students of ‘non-standard’ varieties, as knowledge of the standard serves as a gate-keeping mechanism (Pennycook 2001; Rickford 2012) and ultimately denies students agency in making their own linguistic choices (Leeman 2005). Crucially, while advocates of CLA do not reject the expansion of students’ linguistic repertoires, they do reject the acquisition of prestige varieties and practices as the primary goal of language education.

In particular, proponents of CLA see expansion-oriented approaches as stopping short of the key goals of questioning taken-for-granted language ideologies, promoting students’ critical analysis, and fostering student agency regarding whether to conform to or resist dominant norms. For one, an overriding emphasis on the acquisition of standard varieties fails to acknowledge that even when racialized speakers use standard forms, they are still “heard” as deficient (Flores and Rosa 2015). Second, portraying the acquisition of standard varieties as the key to success ignores the institutional racism and other kinds of bias to which speakers of non-standard varieties are
subjected (Macedo 1997; Villa 2002). The obfuscation of systematic discrimination means that when the promised opportunities fail to materialize, victims are blamed for failing to conform to prestige norms, and thus for their own subordination. Third, emphasizing the acquisition of the standard by *individuals* does nothing to challenge the systematic discrimination of *groups* associated with non-standard varieties (Leeman 2005). Fourth, promoting standard varieties without asking learners to consider the ideologies that privilege those varieties, the connections of such ideologies to ideologies of class, race and nation, or the ways that ideologies are resisted or subverted, can inadvertently end up reifying and reproducing them. As we will see in the next section, moreover, teaching models that on the surface appear to defend the equal value of all language varieties and practices often send subtle messages that in fact some are better than others for things that really matter, such as for public speaking, doing school work or getting a job.

**Sociolinguistics, variation and “appropriateness”**

The establishment of SHL as a distinct subfield of Spanish language education in the 1970s and 1980s coincided with growing interest in the sociolinguistic study of language variation as well as renewed academic attention to Spanish in the US. Not surprisingly, there is a long history of applying sociolinguistic insights to SHL, particularly in calls for educators to recognize the legitimacy of all language varieties, including those spoken by US Latinxs. This recognition, together with the desire to promote students’ acquisition of the prestige variety, led to the rejection of eradication-oriented approaches to non-standard varieties and the adoption of the expansion-oriented approaches mentioned earlier. The growth of sociolinguistics fuelled new awareness and acceptance of language variation in the context of Spanish language education (Del Valle 2014; Leeman and Serafini 2016), where European varieties have historically been privileged (Fernández 2000; García 1993). However, the focus of this new awareness and acceptance has primarily been geographic variation rather than social varieties. More recently, SHL scholars have also called for greater attention to features associated with language contact (e.g., Beaudrie, Ducar and Potowski 2014).

Although the application of sociolinguistics has been primarily in the realm of teacher training and course design, sociolinguistic principles have sometimes also been included within the SHL curriculum itself (Martínez 2003; Valdés 1995). Discussions of variation, as well as activities designed to increase HL students’ sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence, have been incorporated, with the instructional goals of promoting acquisition of the prestige variety and expansion of the bilingual range (Valdés 1995). In addition to these expansion-oriented goals, current pedagogical models often frame the incorporation of sociolinguistics (or the adoption of sociolinguistically informed approaches) as useful for promoting positive attitudes towards linguistic diversity and multiple varieties (e.g., Beaudrie, Ducar and Potowski 2014; Carreira 2000). A crucial distinction between such approaches and critical approaches is that the latter frame discussions of sociolinguistics as a way to promote student consciousness-raising, questioning of taken-for-granted assumptions, and agency (Leeman 2005; Leeman and Serafini 2016; Martínez 2003).

Like the British LA pedagogies critiqued by Fairclough (1992a, 1992b), expansionist models of SHL tend to rely on “appropriateness”-based accounts of sociolinguistic variation. In such accounts, non-standard varieties and practices are described as linguistically valid but “appropriate” only in specific settings, such as with family or friends. In professional or academic settings, in contrast, only the standard variety is appropriate. Such models conflate social and contextual variation by treating the difference between prestige and stigmatized varieties as if it were simply an issue of each being appropriate for a particular setting, rather
than the elevation of the standard and the denigration of other varieties and the people who speak them. Along the same lines, the differences between settings where different varieties are described as appropriate or inappropriate are often discussed in terms of “formality,” and some appropriateness-based accounts describe the use of non-standard varieties in professional settings as the linguistic equivalent of wearing a bathing suit to a formal wedding. This analogy, and the representation of language variation that it embodies, inaccurately give the impression that non-standard varieties are simply informal, rather than stigmatized, and they ignore the association of specific ways of speaking with specific social groups. In this way, appropriateness-based accounts erase the negative ideologies surrounding nonstandard varieties and the people who speak them, who are often represented as unintelligent or “backward.”

In addition, while such models avoid labelling students’ home varieties “incorrect” or “unacceptable,” and they purport to offer a neutral descriptive account of the distribution of varieties by domain, in reality they prescribe the use of the standard variety in academic and professional contexts. Thus, they relegate non-standard varieties to low prestige domains and informal contexts, reserving high status domains and formal contexts for the standard variety (Fairclough 1992b; Villa 2002). This legitimizes knowledge of the standard variety as a gate-keeping mechanism determining who can speak and be heard in high prestige domains, effectively silencing speakers of other varieties and limiting their access to social and economic power (Fairclough 1992b).

A related concern is that discussions of appropriateness typically fail to address the question of who determines what is appropriate, or to mention that appropriateness norms are not universally shared, thus eliding issues of power. Further, a speaker’s use of a particular linguistic form, register, variety or style is not simply a matter of adhering to pre-established notions of appropriateness; instead speakers may choose to flout norms depending on their interactional, rhetorical and political intent. Presenting appropriateness as part of a fixed sociolinguistic order with which speakers must comply, without any acknowledgment that it is historically contingent and subject to change, downplays speaker agency in making linguistic choices and denies the possibility of resistance. In the SHL context, the presentation of appropriateness norms as a sociolinguistic given rhetorically excludes HL speakers from the shaping of such norms, thus denying them full membership in an imagined community of Spanish-speakers (Leeman 2005).

Given their calls to include discussion of social and political aspects of language within language education, advocates of CLA clearly support the discussion of social and contextual variation within the curriculum. Crucially, however, rather than serving primarily as a means to acquire prestige norms and assimilate students to the status quo, the incorporation of sociolinguistics should be designed to help students develop an understanding of how language and linguistic variation work, not just at the formal (i.e., linguistic) level but also with regard to social, political and aesthetic concerns. From a critical perspective, such understanding is key not only to understanding one’s own circumstances and society, but also to imagining how one might transform society.

**Current contributions and pedagogical proposals**

**Dialect awareness, CLA and English-language education**

Given the predominance of English globally and in the US, as well as the relative recency of SHL as a field, it is not surprising that the vast majority of critical pedagogical scholarship concerns the education of speakers of non-standard varieties of English. In the US, CLA proposals have most commonly been for speakers of AAVE, although there have also been proposals for speakers of Hawaiian Creole as well as Caribbean varieties of English.
Many of these projects are also relevant for those Latinxs who speak Chicano English or other non-standard varieties (see Fought 2003; García and Menken 2006). Several CLA proposals build on the dialect awareness pedagogy and curricula developed by Walt Wolfram and his colleagues (Wolfram 1999; Wolfram, Adger and Christian 1999). In order to help students recognize the systematicity and legitimacy of all language varieties, these scholars developed activities in which students analyze data from non-standard varieties in order to identify patterns and meanings. Designed for speakers of prestige and stigmatized varieties alike, dialect awareness activities are meant to combat stereotypes and prejudice, and they also send a positive message about the worth of non-standard varieties as an object of study. Critical dialect awareness activities go beyond merely describing different varieties or celebrating diversity by having students analyze the social meanings and political implications of language and language variation. For example, Godley and Minnici’s (2008) educational unit on language variation included an explicit discussion of language ideologies, while Alim’s (2010) “Real Talk” project, in which students transcribed and analyzed a recorded interview with a well-known hip-hop artist, aimed to educate marginalized students about “how language can be used against them,” and how they can resist (p. 214). This goal is also evident in the Linguistic Profiling Project (Alim 2005, 2010), in which students learned about research documenting racial discrimination based solely on auditory cues (such as in a conversation carried out over the phone) (e.g., Baugh 2003). In addition to examining how language can be used as a tool of subordination, students also explored how linguistics can be used to address real-world social problems.

**CLA and critical approaches to SHL education**

As noted earlier, critical pedagogical proposals for SHL date back to the early 1980s onwards (e.g., Sánchez 1981; Faltis 1990). However, since around the turn of the millennium, there has been a growing strand of critical SHL research which coincides with the growth of the field of SHL more broadly. Much of this scholarship builds on earlier critical pedagogical proposals in Spanish language education by focusing more specifically on language ideologies (but see Parra (2013) for a critical pedagogical project centered on culture and art). Recent critical scholarship includes analyses of the discursive representation of Spanish as a foreign language (e.g., Pomerantz and Schwartz 2011; Train 2007) and examinations of ideologies regarding language variation embodied in SHL teaching materials and practices (e.g., Ducar 2009; Leeman 2012; Villa 2002), as well as pedagogical proposals centered on “confront[ing] and contest[ing] the power issues that abound in language education” (Martínez 2003: 6–7).²

The critical emphasis on the social and the political aspects of language is apparent in Martínez’ (2003) discussion of dialect awareness curricula, where he argues that descriptive accounts of the naturalness and systematicity of variation are insufficient without attention to the indexical social values ascribed to different language varieties. In this vein, Martínez proposes lessons on the function, distribution and evaluation of language varieties, and he convincingly argues for the inclusion of these themes beginning in elementary level courses. Martínez’ proposal also illustrates the distinction between the goals of expansionist and critical approaches and their framing of the value of sociolinguistics. As he puts it:

If our students walk into the class saying *haiga* and walk out saying *haya*, there has been, in my estimation, no value added. However, if they walk in saying *haiga* and walk out saying either *haya* or *haiga* and having the ability to defend their use of *haiga* if and when they see fit, then there has been value added.

---

² Martínez 2003: 6–7
Critical language awareness

Sociolinguistic knowledge is seen as valuable in its own right, not just in the service of acquiring the standard. Importantly, as this quote demonstrates, Martínez envisions students’ agency making their own linguistic choices as well as their critical analytic ability to resist the criticism they might face for flaunting dominant norms.

Students’ agency in deciding which varieties to use and when to use them is a key element of my (2005) proposal. Rejecting the goal of assimilation to existing language hierarchies as a primary goal of language education, I saw using sociolinguistics as a means by which to engage students in questioning common assumptions about language variation, empower students to make their own linguistic decisions, and equip students to challenge the status quo. In addition to explorations of social variation (rather than simply geographic variation), I called for discussions of the political nature of language choices and of how dominant language hierarchies contribute to the subordination of social groups, not just individuals. I recommended that students be asked to consider the implications of their decisions to uphold or resist dominant norms, for both themselves and others. In addition to examining negative portrayals of non-standard varieties and linguistic features associated with language contact situations, SHL pedagogies should also explore the creative and aesthetic possibilities of students’ translingual repertoires, as well as the ways that nonstandard varieties can serve as a resource for identity work (Leeman 2005, 2014).

In our call for a critical incorporation of sociolinguistics into HL and second language education more broadly, Ellen Serafini and I (Leeman and Serafini 2016) underscored current sociolinguistic theory’s emphasis on the intentionality of speakers as they use language and linguistic styles to construct, perform and negotiate their identities. Rather than discussing social varieties and registers as fixed entities with rigid boundaries, we propose that educators focus on examining how speakers draw from their linguistic repertoires to enact various stances and social relations. Further, we argue that CLA and sociolinguistics can serve as the basis for the translingual competence recommended as an educational goal in the Modern Language Association’s 2007 report. Thus, our proposal includes a consideration of how CLA might be integrated throughout the entire post-secondary language curriculum and significantly broadens the range of topics to be included, including language policy, linguistic landscape and multilingualism. Depending on the course and the level of the students, courses might include considerations of the history of multilingualism and Spanish in the US, considerations of language policy and language access, multilingual and English-only schooling, and the representation of Spanish and code-switching in the media, among others.

Putting CLA into practice in SHL

The above discussion of pedagogical proposals for CLA has discussed numerous overarching themes to be included in language education, and there are an infinite number of specific topics and data that can serve as the basis of lessons, discussions and activities designed to address these themes. Educators should keep in mind the importance of drawing from students’ linguistic and life experiences, in order to validate those experiences as worthy of study, but also to promote students’ critical consciousness of their own circumstances and the relation of those circumstances to broader issues. Such discussions can also help students grasp the interrelatedness of ideologies of language, class, race and nation, as well as other types of intersectionality.

As for the kinds of activities best suited to CLA, some of the most commonly proposed activities are ethnographic. Generally speaking, however, it will be useful to prepare students by first engaging them in examinations of language data, which might be recorded by the instructor, available online such as on the Spanish in Texas website (http://spanishintexas.org/), drawn from television or movies, or excerpted from published research. Students can explore
patterns in nonstandard usages, including code-switching and translanguaging, but they should also examine discursive and interactional strategies. In addition to analyzing language data, it is important for students to critically examine language ideologies and the discursive representation of different languages, language varieties and practices, such as in advertisements, language textbooks or public discourse. Students can also carry out critical analyses of languages in the built environment (Malinowski 2015) or conduct surveys and interviews regarding different varieties of Spanish (see Leeman and Serafini (2016) for detailed suggestions and examples).

Ethnographic activities might include analyzing their own language histories and documenting the different linguistic varieties and styles they use in different contexts and with whom, as well as analyzing the conversational and social impact of their choices. In addition, they can observe language patterns in their communities, for example examining gendered patterns of language use (see Martinez 2003), or by recording relatives and friends (with appropriate training regarding the ethical conduct of research).

Future directions

**CLA and critical service learning**

As noted earlier, a key tenet of critical pedagogy is that it must not limit itself to critiques of existing practices and the development of pedagogical alternatives, but must seek to have a positive impact beyond the classroom by helping students to develop the resources to address social problems that cannot be solved by schools alone (Fairclough 1992a). In accordance with this mandate, several recent critical service-learning projects have provided HL students with opportunities to work in their communities to challenge language-related inequities. In one such project, college students created and ran a heritage language book club and an after-school SHL program for elementary school children (Leeman, Rabin and Román-Mendoza, 2011). Participating students went beyond classroom-based discussions to actively resist English-only ideologies and educational policies in a local school, while also challenging the notion that their own Spanish was inadequate or non-standard. In the Medical Spanish for Heritage Learners project (Martínez and Schwartz 2012), HL speakers worked in local health clinics providing various language-based services. Central to the program was coursework on health disparities and the language policies and ideologies undergirding discrimination in health care settings.

Given the current interest in community-based learning, this is likely to be a growth area for CLA-based pedagogies, one particularly well-suited to addressing the goals of positive social change (see, for example, Lowlrther-Pereira 2015).

**CLA throughout the curriculum**

Although Delpit (1995) argued as early as twenty years ago that all students should be educated regarding the legitimacy of all language varieties, in the realm of English language education CLA-based pedagogies are still most commonly discussed as a pedagogical approach for marginalized students or speakers of nonstandard varieties. Within the realm of Spanish language education, my colleagues and I have explicitly called for CLA to be integrated throughout the curriculum (Leeman 2005; Leeman and Rabin 2007; Leeman and Serafini 2016). For one, limiting the discussion of language discrimination and ideologies to the HL curriculum might inadvertently give the impression that such topics were not central to the discipline. Thus, we provided multiple examples of how CLA could be productively incorporated within literature courses (Leeman and Rabin 2007). Further, by exploring language ideologies in geographically
Critical language awareness

or chronologically distant texts and contexts, students can grasp that language ideologies exist everywhere but are also sociohistorically situated. In particular, discussions of Spanish as a language of power in colonial Latin America in contrast with its subordination in the US can help students recognize that a language’s status is not linked to some sort of inherent worth (Leeman and Rabin 2007; Rabin and Leeman 2015). In addition, incorporating elements of CLA throughout the language curriculum can promote students’ development of critical translingual competence (Leeman and Serafini 2016).

Given current understandings of the importance of language in the reproduction of a wide range of social constructs, including but not limited to gender, race, nation and culture, it seems only natural that critical analyses of language should be integrated within language studies. However, there is no reason that such considerations should be isolated to language departments. Indeed, it is crucial that scholars and students in other disciplines also consider the role of language, both as a site where ideologies are reproduced but also as a social category with symbolic and political meaning at multiple scales from micro-level interactions to macro-level considerations such as who is allowed to become a citizen. Thus, going forward, it will be crucial for CLA educators to reach out to educators in other departments in order to promote interdisciplinary collaborations that engage students in explorations of the social and political aspects of language in the quest for social justice.

Notes

1 In this chapter my use of the term “standard” is a short-hand way to refer to language varieties and practices that are perceived or represented as more correct, universal and pure. However, rather than varieties that people actually speak, standard varieties are idealized abstractions based on ideologies regarding the desirability and possibility of eliminating variation as well as the social, moral and aesthetic qualities of different varieties and the people that speak them (Lippi-Green 2012; Milroy and Milroy 1999).

2 In addition to these critical analyses of SHL education, there is also a growing body of scholarship examining the language ideologies in SFL education (e.g., Leeman 2011, 2014; Pomerantz and Schwartz 2011; Train 2007; Valdés et al. 2003).

Further reading

An edited collection with introduction and chapter by Fairclough outlining the goals of CLA and critiquing the notion of “appropriateness.”

The foundational text on critical pedagogy which has been translated into numerous languages.

A discussion of how the incorporation of sociolinguistics into HL and L2 education can serve as the basis for critical language awareness and translingual competence, with numerous examples.

References


Critical language awareness


