

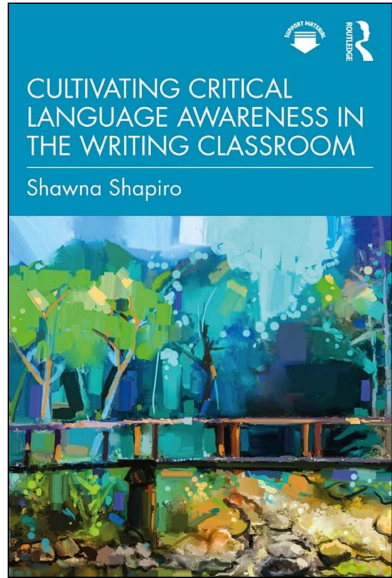
Review

OLIVIA ROWLAND

Shapiro, Shawn. (2022). *Cultivating Critical Language Awareness in the Writing Classroom*. Routledge. 345 pages.

A recent focus of WAC scholarship has been linguistic diversity. Recognizing the interconnections of language and race, scholars have argued for the necessity of attending to race and enacting anti-racist pedagogies in writing classrooms across the disciplines and in faculty development (Martini & Webster, 2021; Poe, 2013). Researchers have also called for WAC to support multilingual writers (Hall, 2009; Zawacki & Cox, 2011) and multilingual faculty (Geller, 2011). Although the need for a more socially just approach to writing instruction in WAC is clearly established, there has been less scholarship that illustrates exactly

how writing teachers might promote linguistic inclusivity, or *how* WAC directors could incorporate anti-racist linguistic pedagogies into faculty development. Shawna Shapiro's *Cultivating Critical Language Awareness in the Writing Classroom* addresses these practical needs by arguing for a Critical Language Awareness (CLA) framework, which Shapiro defines as "an approach to language and literacy education that focuses on the intersections of language, identity, power, and privilege, with the goal of promoting self-reflection, social justice, and rhetorical agency among student writers" (p. 4). Shapiro demonstrates through CLA how writing teachers can balance a commitment to working toward a more equitable future with their responsibility to provide students with the tools they need for success in the world we live in today. The book aims to build on what teachers already know and do, and it invites readers who teach in any discipline to use CLA. Combining an accessible introduction to CLA with a wealth of adaptable "pathways" for incorporating CLA into the classroom, the text will be useful for teachers new to linguistic inclusivity and writing studies experts alike.



While CLA has been widely used in the U.K. and appears frequently in scholarship on secondary English instruction, translanguaging, as Shapiro notes, remains dominant in U.S. writing studies scholarship. Mentions of CLA in composition scholarship remain few but have become more frequent (Gere et al., 2021; Leonard, 2021). WAC scholarship has similarly begun to engage with CLA, specifically through transdisciplinary collaborations with heritage language scholars (Cavazos et al., 2018; Hebbard & Hernández, 2020). Other WAC research has analyzed students' development of critical academic literacies, a subset of CLA (Hendrickson & de Mueller, 2016). These studies offer valuable insight into the application of CLA in WAC, and they identify CLA as an area open for additional research. As such, even though Shapiro writes for a general writing studies audience, the book can assist WAC researchers in coming to a broader understanding of CLA and its applicability for writing instruction across the disciplines. Shapiro's book will also be of interest to writing teachers and faculty in the disciplines who want to learn more about linguistic diversity and socially just pedagogies.

Part of the book's broad accessibility comes from its structure, which allows readers to select aspects of CLA they want to learn about. Shapiro does ask that all readers engage with part 1, which provides a concise introduction to CLA and sets out key tenets of CLA Pedagogy. Part 2 introduces Shapiro's four pathways to CLA, a choose-your-own-adventure section of possibilities for implementing CLA in a wide range of classrooms. Finally, part 3 offers a practical guide to using CLA in the classroom and beyond.

In the first chapter, Shapiro explains why writing studies can benefit from a CLA approach. While much scholarship on anti-racist pedagogies and translanguaging in composition argues persuasively against teaching standardized English, Shapiro contends that this research often fails to offer clear, practical alternatives for writing instruction. As such, Shapiro identifies a core tension in writing studies literature between "pragmatism (i.e., what students need for today) and progressivism (i.e., what the world needs for a more just tomorrow)" (p. 4). Since much scholarship puts progressivism above pragmatism, Shapiro asserts, it has left many teachers stuck in the middle, wanting to challenge linguistic discrimination but also wanting to prepare students for success. This may be particularly true for faculty teaching writing in the disciplines, as they are tasked with helping students learn disciplinary conventions. Shapiro positions CLA as a form of "both/and pedagogy" that can assist such teachers in navigating the pragmatism-progressivism divide (p. 12).

The second chapter includes a brief history of CLA and definitions of key terms. Shapiro defines terms, such as language awareness, discourse, prescriptivism, standardized language, and language ideology for a generalist audience of both teachers and students. Having provided foundational knowledge about CLA, Shapiro breaks

down its central tenets in chapter three. She first discusses the intersections between power, privilege, identity, and language. Shapiro then explains how, in addition to self-reflection, CLA fosters social justice and rhetorical agency, equipping students with an awareness of the full range of linguistic choices available to them and the possible outcomes of those choices. She concludes this chapter by outlining the six principles of CLA Pedagogy.

After defining CLA in part 1, Shapiro lays out four pathways that teachers might use to implement CLA in part 2. Each of the four chapters in part 2 corresponds to one pathway for CLA pedagogy, and each pathway includes a set of learning outcomes and three units with lesson ideas, materials, and assignments that instructors can adapt for their own classrooms.

The Sociolinguistics pathway, described in chapter four, engages students in considering language in relation to identity and cultural contexts. Shapiro notes that this pathway can “pair well” with WAC because sociolinguistics has connections to “anthropology, education, psychology, and sociology” (p.87). Faculty in those disciplines and in other related fields can easily incorporate sociolinguistics and linguistic discrimination as subject material and ask students to critically analyze language. Shapiro does acknowledge, however, that incorporating sociolinguistics may be challenging for teachers without prior experience in the subject (p. 88).

Chapter five’s Critical Academic Literacies pathway will be of more immediate use to WAC professionals. As mentioned earlier, critical academic literacies represent an established approach in WAC (Hendrickson and de Mueller, 2016). Shapiro argues that instruction in critical academic literacies most directly relates to WID because it allows students to explore “how writing genres and conventions reflect the values and priorities of different disciplines” (p. 132). This pathway also offers opportunities to discover possibilities for “linguistic creativity and rhetorical resistance” in writing across the disciplines (p. 133). WAC faculty may be particularly interested in Unit 5.1, “Academic Disciplines as Linguistic Communities,” which introduces students to the concept of linguistic communities and asks them to connect conventions in their discipline to larger cultural values, with assignments including analyzing academic metaphors and researching disciplinary linguistic communities (p. 137). Also relevant is Unit 5.3, “Linguistic Pluralism in the Academy,” which invites students to think about how linguistic bias operates in the academy and imagine how it might be more linguistically pluralistic (p. 159). Materials from both these units could be easily adapted to writing classrooms across the disciplines.

Chapter six introduces the Critical Media/Discourse Analysis pathway. As Shapiro explains, this pathway approaches “media literacy from a CLA perspective,” with topics including identity and power in social media, bias in the news, and dominant cultural narratives (176). The units in this chapter aim to engage students in “looking

closely and critically at discourse,” so that they can analyze “the stories and ideologies that can hinder or further the cause of social justice” (p. 177). This pathway might work well in courses that already use discourse and media as objects of analysis, like writing courses in the humanities. In addition, this chapter provides resources for a CLA approach to information literacy.

More widely applicable for faculty across the disciplines may be Shapiro’s Communicating-Across-Difference pathway, which she discusses in chapter seven. This pathway engages students in difference through language. Perhaps most useful for WAC is Unit 7.3, “Writing-as-(Re)Design,” which uses design to cultivate inclusive communication (p. 237). This unit “show[s] how our writing assignments can promote students’ development in four key skill areas that are central to a design thinking approach: Thinking Synthetically, Practicing Empathy, Taking Rhetorical Risks, and Responding to Real-World Problems” (p. 237–238). Shapiro suggests a range of assignments to meet these goals, including flash writing, infographics, letters, and multimodal compositions. Teachers who want to promote inclusive conversation will also be interested in Unit 7.2, “Difficult Dialogue in the Classroom” (p. 232).

Ultimately, though, one core strength of Shapiro’s work is that she leaves it up to individual readers to decide how they want to use CLA in their classrooms. Shapiro explores how teachers and administrators can select and adapt approaches from the previous chapters in part 3. While earlier chapters present a wide range of possibilities, chapter eight provides practical tools for assessing how best to draw from CLA. Shapiro describes how to conduct a needs assessment, illustrating with examples from her own courses. For teachers with less curricular flexibility, Shapiro also demonstrates how CLA can align with the Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing. Moving from course design to everyday teaching practices, Shapiro explains in chapter nine how writing teachers can build CLA into best practices for everything from facilitating class discussions and talking about readings to scaffolding peer review and responding to student writing (p. 281). Shapiro’s tips for using CLA to guide feedback may be particularly relevant for both writing studies experts and WAC faculty. While many teachers are unsure of how to give feedback on grammar in line with socially just pedagogies (or whether to give feedback on grammar at all), Shapiro argues for the importance of approaching grammar rhetorically and gives concrete strategies for doing so.

Chapter ten wraps up the book by broadening out to consider how CLA can inform efforts for institutional and programmatic change. After discussing possibilities for developing and assessing CLA curricula, Shapiro illustrates the use of CLA in faculty development. WAC directors will be interested in Shapiro’s advice for incorporating CLA into discussions with faculty. She suggests that WAC directors “name the tensions” between pragmatism and progressivism (p. 321), “use accessible and

memorable language” when discussing writing studies concepts (p. 324), and “link CLA to other DEI work” (p. 324). Shapiro concludes that CLA asks all of us to challenge linguistic discrimination and promote linguistic inclusivity not only in our classrooms, but also in our institutions and our communities.

One area I wish the book had covered more extensively is the possible connections between CLA and translanguaging. Shapiro does recognize that “there is often a great deal of overlap between CLA and Students’ Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL), as well as with translanguaging and anti-racist orientations to writing” (p. 61), and some of the strategies in her pathways chapters are drawn from these approaches, but she spends more time working to distinguish CLA from translanguaging. However, the scholarship in WAC that engages with CLA has done so through a translanguaging framework, using CLA to inform a translanguaging approach to language awareness (Cavazos et al., 2018; Hebbard & Hernández, 2020). Understanding the connections between CLA, translanguaging, and anti-racist pedagogies could help writing studies scholars more easily use CLA to build on their existing work.

The book’s central import for most teachers and faculty remains, however, the trove of resources it provides for implementing CLA. Shapiro has committed to publishing even more materials for interested writing instructors on the book’s companion website, the CLA Collective. Faculty teaching writing in any discipline can easily pick up the book and find exercises they can adapt to their classes to enact linguistic inclusivity, and WAC directors can use it as a tool for promoting language awareness in faculty development. As Shapiro demonstrates, CLA has the potential to bolster existing efforts toward promoting socially just linguistic pedagogies in writing classrooms across the curriculum—especially if we “build communities of practice around CLA” that transcend disciplinary borders (p. 330). Given their transdisciplinary orientation, WAC professionals seem particularly well positioned to engage in further research and practice to discover the possibilities that CLA has to offer.

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