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"I Want You to Want Me Too": Enacting Linguistic Justice in Language & Grammar Courses

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Abstract: This manuscript uses Kendrick Lamar's lyrics, The Heart Part 5, and my personal experiences teaching English Language Arts (secondary and English education), specifically grammar and language, to demonstrate the importance of linguistic justice (Baker-Bell, 2020a) in ELA classrooms. Baker-Bell's (2020a) framework of linguistic justice is utilized as the foundation for being, learning and teaching in my grammar and language courses. Throughout this manuscript, I share narratives about my personal experiences teaching and researching as a way to reflect on ways to enact linguistic justice in English Education grammar courses. I interweave Kendrick Lamar's lyrics to the song The Heart Part 5, to guide reflection and analysis of the practices I have used to enact linguistic justice in English education grammar courses. The manuscript concludes with best practices for ELA educators to enact linguistic justice in their classrooms.

Keywords: *anti-Blackness, Black language, language & grammar, linguistic justice*

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(I want, I want, I want, I want)
But I want you to want me too (I want, I want, I want, I want)
I want the hood to want me back (I want, I want, I want, I want)
I want the hood
Look what I done for you (Look what I done for you)
Look what I done for you

Kendrick Lamar, The Heart Part 5

I began my career as a high school English teacher in Prince George's County, Maryland, a predominately Black school district. Growing up in Winton Terrace, aka The T, a Black community, it was only right, and my moral responsibility, to teach Black students. I made a vow to ensure my students knew their history, excellence, and brilliance. In the words of Kendrick, I *wanted the hood to want me back… Look what I had done for you* … Vulnerably, I wanted the hood to know that I wasn't a sell-out and I was doing the work alongside our community. But also selfishly, I wanted to be praised for the work that I was doing in our community with Black students. I thought it was my moral responsibility to go back to my 'hood' or to a different Black community and save them from poverty. I thought I was supposed to prepare them for the "white" world that awaited them. I came to understand that my efforts were enacting white ways of knowing, being, learning, and teaching (Porcher, 2021) and that I had to deal with the savior complex I'd developed. While it took a variety of forms, one of the means I used to enact white ways of being was expecting my students to "dress up" when they did presentations within our classroom. I limited their freedom to express themselves through dress or their own individual swag. This insistence on looking "professional" is a characteristic of the white supremacy culture of paternalism (Jones & Okun, 2001) where I, as the teacher, was the one with the power in the classroom. I made decisions for all the students. In addition to a dress code, I had a zero-tolerance policy for late work. By wanting my students to exhibit perfectionism (Jones & Okun, 2001), I was holding them to another characteristic of white supremacy culture—a white way of teaching and learning. Perhaps most profoundly, I worked to ensure my Black students spoke and wrote using white mainstream English (wME) when inside the classroom (Baker-Bell, 2020a; Porcher, 2021). Students were only permitted to use Black English outside in the hallway or the cafeteria. I enacted linguistic violence upon my students. Kendrick spits:

> *History repeats again*
> *Make amends, then find a n----- with the same skin to do it*
> *But that's the culture*

I *repeated history* by enacting anti-Black linguistic violence upon my students. I thought this would ensure their success, not only in the classroom and school but in society. Instead, I became someone with the *same Black skin* perpetuating anti-Black language practices, believing that it was *the culture* to prepare Black students for college and success.

I open with Kendrick Lamar's lyrics from *The Heart Part 5*, and my personal experiences teaching secondary English language arts students because they illustrate the cognitive dissonance I have experienced teaching students grammar and language practices in ELA classrooms (secondary and English education programs). I am a storyteller and teacher activist (Baker-Bell, 2020b), committed to centering Blackness in English education. Our words and our stories as Black women matter (Haddix, 2015). English education spaces are white-dominated, not only through the lens of teachers' races but also through the centering of whiteness in the curriculum (Porcher, 2021). However, our stories as Black people

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should take up space, be centered, and be deemed legitimate sources of knowledge in English education (Haddix, 2015).

Although our storied lives are not welcomed and are shunned in academia (Toliver, 2021), we utilize them to center our ancestors' history, legacy, and greatness. Storytelling remains one of the most powerful literacy and language practices that Black women utilize to convey their knowledge and experiences (Baker-Bell, 2020b; Richardson, 2003). It is an essential component of the Black experience and existence intricately linked to African nations with their own storytellers or griots (Hale, 1998; Toliver, 2021). These storytellers served as teachers, genealogists, historians, advisers, exhorters, witnesses, and praise-singers (Hale, 1998; Toliver, 2021). Our ancestors told stories "to comfort, teach, and record history" (Champion, 2003, p. 3). Our storytelling is a form of resistance to whiteness and the preservation of our existence (Toliver, 2021).

Throughout this article, I share stories about my personal experiences teaching and researching as a way to reflect on ways to enact linguistic justice in English education grammar courses. This article is a demonstration of centering Blackness and decentering whiteness, as researchers are often restricted to gathering stories, not telling and elevating them (Toliver, 2021). This article pushes back against the structure of academic writing. I will continue to interweave Kendrick's *The Heart Part 5* lyrics to guide the reader through my reflective stories and my analysis of the practices I have used to demonstrate linguistic justice in grammar courses. This interweaving of music and storytelling is an answer to Dillard's (2000) call for the validation of knowledge produced in alternative sites. Through the interweaving of storytelling and Kendrick's lyrics, I employ Dillard's (2022) work of (re)membering my own stories of experiencing and enacting linguistic violence throughout my life, inside and outside of classrooms. I also employ Coles's (2020) Black storywork as a way to think about, do, and write scholarship that centers Blackness by enacting linguistic justice in a grammar course I taught.

Dillard (2022) defines re(membering) as a spiritual experience that requires us to re(member) who we are—our history, culture, and contributions, that honors the history of Black life, resistance, knowledge, and culture. As a Black educator, I attend to the spirit of the students I teach and "talk back" (hooks, 1989). I resist and create the grammar and language I wished I had as a student (Dillard, 2022). Throughout this article, I re(member) and tell stories that illuminate the politics, spiritual consciousness, and creativity for teaching and learning that has always driven me. By re(membering) my own experiences and actions of linguistic violence in classroom spaces, I "call my very life back to myself," (Dillard, 2022, p. 5) on behalf of Black people, my Black family, and my former Black students that I harmed. I refuse to forget or be shamed for my internalized anti-Black thoughts and actions concerning grammar and language inside and outside the classroom. Through my re(membering), I expose how I had been convinced to elevate white Mainstream English (wME) (Baker-Bell, 2020a) and to view Black language as deficient. The re(membering) of my stories and the work of Baker-Bell expanded my being, learning, and teaching (Porcher, 2021). Their work moved me to become more fully human in the face of inhumanity (Dillard, 2022) that is the space of English language and grammar courses that treat Black people's language as less than human.

Coles (2020) defines Black storywork as the individual or collective stories that emerge from the lived experiences of Black people and communities. Black storywork uses Black knowledge(s) as a tool to extend and author oneself beyond the conditions of anti-Blackness. It is a direct response to overcome

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society's "refusal to acknowledge Black peoples as human, and worthy of regard, recognition, and resources" (Dumas, 2016, p. 8). It is an action-oriented process, seeking to overcome the ills of anti-Blackness (Coles, 2020). Through my stories and reflections based on my lived experiences learning and teaching grammar, language, and literacy, the readers will experience my journey of shifting from enacting linguistic violence to linguistic justice.

Literature Review

Black Language: An Epiphany

I began a tenure-track position at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and was shortly assigned to teach English Language: Grammar and Usage. To be honest, I was salty because this is not my area of expertise or interest. Nevertheless, when you are the new kid on the block, you take what you get, and you don't have a fit. No matter what I was assigned to teach, I was going to take the course and make it my own. Around the same time, I was introduced to Baker-Bell's 2020 book *Linguistic Justice: Black Language, Literacy, Identity, and Pedagogy*, and more specifically the legitimacy of the Black language.

History of Black Language

Enslavers utilized language planning as an oppressive tool to separate captive Africans who spoke the same language, as a way to minimize rebellion (Baker-Bell, 2020a; Baugh, 2015). Their primary mechanism was to separate families and those who shared a common language before they even left Africa. Enslaved Africans who survived the Middle Passage arrived in the Caribbean and the Americas without a common language to communicate with one another or with their enslavers (Baker-Bell, 2020a; Baugh, 2015). By law, enslaved Africans were denied the right to read and write in the United States (Thomas, 2018). However, they had to learn the language to "build the physical, cultural and intellectual foundations of the nation" (Thomas, 2018, quoted in Baker-Bell, 2020a, p. 65). Despite the impact of language planning, Africans created a vernacular from the remnants of their mother tongues, home languages, and pieces of the English language (Baker-Bell, 2020a). This provided a way for the enslaved Africans to communicate with each other and withhold information from their oppressors (Baldwin, 1979). What enslaved Africans did to create their own language—Black Language—is nothing short of genius and should be celebrated.

Black Language Defined

Black language is a hybrid of English and West African languages (Green, 2002; Johnson et al., 2017; Rickford & Rickford, 2000). It is a counter-language, a site of rebellion and resistance to conquest and domination over Black bodies and language (Baker-Bell, 2020a; hooks, 1994). It is a complicated rule-based linguistic system (Smitherman, 1994) with "syntax, phonology, morphology, semantics and pragmatics" (Johnson, 2019, p. 206). It has different cultural styles and methods of discourse (Baker-Bell, 2017; Johnson, 2019) and it is spoken by millions of Black people throughout the United States (Baker-Bell, 2020a).

We Got Rules Too!

Black language is complex; it has rules. Some of these are present in the syntax, semantics, consonants, and rhetorical features (Baker-Bell, 2020a). Some examples of syntax within the Black language include: habitual be, regularized agreement, zero copula, multiple negation, den, bin, and optional possessive 's (Baker-Bell, 2020a). Examples of semantics include words, idioms and slang. Pronunciation includes the ways in which Black people use consonants, final consonant clusters, and sounds. Finally, Black language includes the rhetorical feature of signifyin.'Signifyin' is ritualistic

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discursive wordplay practice within the Black community. Depending on what 'hood"[1] you are from, it could be known as playing the dozens or where I am from, The T, we call it cappin.'

I never knew that my grandmother's use of language aligned with the semantics of Black language. She never missed the opportunity to let me know when my behavior and any of my siblings was triflin'. Trifilin' can be defined as disgusting, out of pocket, wrong, etc. It wasn't until I was in a program meeting with a bunch of my white colleagues, and I yelled, "what y'all are doing is triflin'!" that I realized that one, white people don't use the word triflin' and two, it wasn't considered a "word" according to white mainstream English. Triflin' is a part of my family's and friends' everyday language, so I use it at least three times a day. Not only did I not know that it wasn't a "word," but it was a while before I even knew that there was Black Language.

Hatin' on Black Language

Due to my ignorance, I referred to Black Language as slang and/or vernacular. I was ignorant and had negative perceptions toward the very language my grandma, family, and I speak. I was taught to "scoff at the Negro dialect" (Woodson, 1933, p. 10). I wasn't taught to study the linguistic history of Black language. Furthermore, Black language was shunned and not validated in my educational experiences. According to the OG[2] Dr. Smitherman (1979), my experience and the experiences of other Black folx, is a part of a fraudulent scheme (Johnson, 2018) against black youth linguistic repertoires. The goal has always been linguistic and cultural absorption and assimilation of the *other* into the dominant culture (Smitherman, 1994; Sledd, 1972). I still remember saying "san-wich" in my 3rd grade English Language Arts class, and my Black teacher constantly correcting me to say "sandddd-wwwich." My teacher was focused on us speaking and pronouncing words using wME as opposed to us speaking our mother tongues (Tan, 1990). Each time after being corrected, my mind raced to make sure I could pronounce the words I wanted to say or read in the assigned text. My teacher wasn't the only one that pushed linguistic and cultural absorption. My aunt did as well. She interrupted my cousins and me anytime we used the word "ain't." Everyone in my family used the word "ain't," and I didn't know it wasn't considered a word in wME. I didn't want to disappoint my aunt, so I always watched my words around her.

Anti-Blackness is endemic (Warren & Coles, 2020). It operates and manifests in Black bodies. My teachers, from elementary school through college, told me that Black language should not be spoken in classroom settings and corrected me when I spoke Black language. I repeated these experiences with my Black students when I was a high school English teacher. I corrected their language, telling them they could only speak Black language in the hallways or when we were not having class. ELA curriculum and classrooms reinforce racial and linguistic subjugation to protect white ways of knowing, being, learning, and teaching (Johnson, 2018; Smitherman, 1979). WmE in reading, writing, and skill and drill grammar (Johnson, 2019) was privileged in my classroom as a student and teacher. I policed the language of Black students by forcing them to speak the language of the

1 I used the word hood with a positive connotation; highlighting the beauty and complexities of the Black community I grew up in, along with other Black communities throughout the country.

2 While I attend in many ways to the Eurocentric parameters of American Psychological Association requirements for professional papers, throughout the paper, I use words and concepts from Black culture, including Black English (Wynter-Hote & Smith, 2020), to frame how teacher educators can center Blackness in English Education.

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oppressor (Johnson et al., 2017). I bought into the *culture* that Kendrick describes, that overtly and covertly devalues Black language and elevated wME as superior (Johnson et al., 2017). I elevated wME and praised Black students' abilities to blackout (avoid speaking their own language) their language and erase elements of their *culture* (Johnson et al., 2017). Morrison (1994) argues that "oppressive language does more than represent violence, it is violence; does more than represent the limits of knowledge, it limits knowledge."

I learned that respectability politics (Higginbotham, 1993; Wheeler & Swords, 2010) and forcing Black people to let go of their language in classroom settings (Labov, 1970) was a form of anti-Black violence. Furthermore, it robbed Black students of the joy, dexterity, and creativity in African storytelling and language passed down from our elders, pastors, family, and community (Johnson, 2019). While preparing to teach the English Language: Grammar and Usage course and engaging with the work of Baker-Bell (2020a), I had an out of body experience. I experienced a range of emotions, such as sadness, shame, disbelief, and rage, for my lack of knowledge and actions of enacting linguistic violence as a former high school educator. While experiencing the range of these emotions, I began to think about how I could move into action. This epiphany was recognizing my opportunity to enact linguistic justice in an area that haunted and oppressed me for years—grammar and language. More specifically, I would be able to show up as my full self(ves) and bring my identities to my research, pedagogical practices, theory, and writing (Johnson, 2019). It led me to the question: what does linguistic justice look like in action in an English Language: Grammar and Usage course preparing preservice teachers to teach in grades 6-12 ELA classrooms?

Course Context: The Weight of Disruption

Our foundation was trained to accept whatever follows
Dehumanized, insensitive
Scrutinize the way we live for you and I

When viewing the course syllabus, I knew that the content would "acknowledge" diverse English[3] but still ensure students would "master" wME. After reading Baker-Bell's (2020a) work, I recognized just how *dehumanized* and *insensitive* I had become to upholding white supremacy culture in ELA classrooms. For example, ensuring that my students meet the standards of biased assessments, and dishonoring their humanity. The biased assessments within the high school classes I taught were harmful as they penalized students for not performing well, as opposed to assessments that were "educationally beneficial and mitigated the use of and harm caused by excessive testing" (Fairtest, para. 1). Johnson et al. (2017) argues that when Black students' prior knowledge, culture, language, and literacies are marginalized, it intentionally and/or unintentionally enacts violence upon them. The violence that I enacted upon my students would not end as long as the curriculum perpetuated oppression and anti-Blackness. I am determined to rewrite my wrongs and disrupt white supremacy culture in English education by ensuring that preservice teachers would know how to avoid enacting linguistic violence upon students (Baker-Bell, 2020a) in their future classrooms. Furthermore, I created a syllabus that was not only in celebration of the inclusion of Black language in comparison to wME in English education (Hull et al.,

3 I introduced the students to the phrase "Diverse English" in the grammar and language course. According to wME the phrase could be read as Diverse English Language. In an effort to center Blackness, I have settled on the term Diverse English, to demonstrate linguistic inventiveness: "linguistic improvisation and manipulation of language; the use of language to mark personal style and creativity; the ability to play with and on the word" (Baker-Bell, 2020a, p. 79).

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1977; Ohito & Coles, 2020), but intentionally centers Black language in English in education, as valuable knowledge by itself. More specifically, I wouldn't create a syllabus that just added text (broadly defined) that focused on Black language without application. It would become integral and central to every element of the course.

> *The purpose is in the lessons we learnin' now*
> *Sacrifice personal gain over everything*
> *Just to see the next generation better than ours*
> *I wasn't perfect, the skin I was in had truly suffered*

My twin goals of enacting linguistic justice and disrupting linguistic violence cost me as a Black woman in a white-dominated space, as I know Black faculty experience institutional racism (Porcher, 2020; Porcher & Austin, 2021). In addition, I've had direct experiences with discrimination and personal racism (Griffin et al., 2011; Porcher, 2020). One area of racism that I remember vividly from teaching grammar and language in the English education program was when I had virtual office hours with a white woman student with a huge President Trump flag in the background and Fox news playing on the television, during the height of the 2020 presidential election. While I understand free speech as a Black woman in a white-dominated space, what happens when violence is understood as free speech? The student used the course assignments and our weekly encounters to express her freedom of speech in a way that I felt intentionally enacted violence upon me. In her assignments that were focused on her sharing details about her identity, she focused on communism and not allowing certain people to take over her country that her family fought so hard for. Furthermore, she wrote about Candace Owens[4] as her muse for understanding and engaging with Black people. The student also wrote about the Black woman that sat directly behind former president Donald Trump during the townhall meeting that he hosted. Throughout the town hall meeting, the camera panned to the Black woman, who nonverbally agreed with every point that President Donald Trump made concerning his support and initiatives for the Black community. She utilized this example to demonstrate that there are Black people who support and agree with the former president's initiatives for the Black community. She intentionally focused on people who had very negative views or who had enacted harm and violence upon Black people. Although I consistently expressed discomfort concerning her behavior in the course and toward me, she nonetheless stayed in the program, and graduated to become a future teacher. I expressed that her behavior towards me as a Black woman was dangerous and will transfer to the ways in which she engages and teaches Black students in the classroom.

My experience, although very painful, aligned with the experiences of other Black faculty. Black professors face a myriad of challenges due to racism such as role conflict, isolation, a lack of respect (Aguirre, 2000; Harlow, 2003), unwelcoming and hostile classroom environments in white-dominated institutions (Tuitt et al., 2009), and problematic white students and behaviors (Porcher, 2020; Harlow, 2003; McGowan, 2000; Stanley, 2006). This includes questioning the content knowledge, authority, and credibility of Black faculty and reporting their concerns to department chairs and other white faculty (Porcher, 2020) when white students experience a shift of power from a white person to a Black person. More than 80% of educators in both K-12 schools and academia are white (Bertrand & Porcher, 2020). Very rarely do students have the opportunity to learn from a person in color, or have

4 Candace Owens is a conservative influencer, political grifter, and commentator who supports white supremacy, nationalism, terrorism, and anti-Black violence.

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experiences with people of color in leadership roles. This often leads them to believe that Black professors force a racial agenda upon them (Delano-Oriaran & Parks, 2015). This was evident in the student described above, as we continued to have experiences where she attacked me.

I am the only Black faculty in the English education program. *The skin I was in had truly suffered…*because I was Black, I experienced push-back from white students on the focus to disrupt wME and enact linguistic justice in English education. Most glaringly, I was the first Black educator for many of the students. Johnson (2018) asserts that teaching about white supremacy, whiteness and anti-Blackness, is not for the faint of heart. It requires a deep consciousness and awareness of racial and social injustices against the Black community. It requires boldness to resist school-sanctioned (K-20) language (Johnson, 2018). Although I experienced racism, anti-Blackness and discrimination as a Black faculty member, I would not be kept from enacting linguistic justice in the grammar and language course. *The purpose is in the lessons we learnin' now…* Once you know better, you do better. I knew that I could no longer teach content without expanding my own criticality (Muhammad, 2020) and the criticality of students. I *sacrificed personal gain over everything, Just to see the next generation better than ours…*I was willing to take on the challenge of linguistic justice to ensure that future generations of teachers and teacher educators would learn how to disrupt linguistic violence in their current and future classrooms.

Theoretical Framework: Linguistic Justice & Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy

Linguistic justice is an antiracist approach to language and literacy education (Baker-Bell, 2020a). More specifically, linguistic justice focuses on anti-Black linguistic racism and white linguistic hegemony and supremacy in classrooms in the world. Anti-Black linguistic racism is socially constructed "linguistic violence, persecution, dehumanization, and marginalization that Black language speakers experience" in schools, classrooms, and their personal lives (Baker-Bell, 2020a, p. 11). It is aligned with the anti-Black racism, policing, and oppression Black people encounter, moving and engaging across the world in Black bodies. Anti-Black language is normalized in our everyday lives, classrooms, schools, and especially grammar and language courses, like the one I was assigned to teach. Linguistic hegemony is defined as dominant groups creating a consensus and convincing others to accept their language norms and usage as the standard (Wiley, 1996). The standard has become wME and white linguistic and cultural values in our classrooms (Baker-Bell, 2020a; Pimentel, 2011). It advances the needs, self-interests, and racial privileges of whiteness at the expense of linguistically minoritizing and marginalizing communities (Baker-Bell 2020a). Anti-Black linguistic racism eradicates groups' languages, identities, community intelligence, community cultures, and theories of realities (Baker-Bell, 2020a).

Linguistic justice places Black language at the center of Black students' language education and experiences. It decenters wME as the be-all and end-all for Black speakers, or for any speakers. It teaches Black students to respond to white hegemonic standards by challenging, interrogating, and resisting anti-Black linguistic racism. It affords Black students the same linguistic liberties afforded to white students. Black students are not expected to eradicate their language (Paris, 2012) or code-switch (Higginbotham, 1993; Wheeler & Swords, 2010) in a classroom that enacts linguistic justice.

An educator and classroom demonstrating linguistic justice utilizes an antiracist Black language pedagogy. Antiracist Black language pedagogy

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centers Blackness, "confronts white linguistic and cultural hegemony, and contests anti-Blackness" (Baker-Bell, 2020a, p. 32). This requires drastic changes in English language arts (K-20) classrooms and curriculum (Johnson, 2018). Antiracist Black language pedagogy provides space to elevate the verbal geniuses and identities of Black students in classrooms (Sealey-Ruiz, 2005). More specifically, antiracist Black language pedagogy intentionally interrogates white linguistic hegemony and anti-Black linguistic racism. In a class where Black students are linguistically free, they develop critical multiliteracies and they can name and work to dismantle anti-Black linguistic racism in classrooms, curriculums, research, and teachers' attitudes. Antiracist Black language pedagogy is informed by the history of Black language and Black people's ways of knowing and being in the world (Richardson, 2003; Sanchez, 2007). Students are given the opportunity to learn about the historical, racial, cultural, and political background of Black language. It unapologetically rejects the lie of wME as the standard and should be used to empower Black students. Anti-Black language pedagogy provides an intentional space for healing and liberation (Richardson, 2003), by increasing Black students' consciousness of Black language and anti-Black linguistic racism, and expanding their creativity in the use of Black language within the classroom space.

Course Redesign: Linguistic Justice in Action

Temptation and patience, everything that the body nurtures
I felt the good, I felt the bad, and I felt the worry
But all-in-all, my productivity had stayed urgent

Deciding to change the English Language: Grammar and Usage course focused on teaching wME would cause me to *feel the good, feel the bad, feel the worry*. Although I let students know on the first day of class that we would disrupt wME, and center linguistic justice in the class, I knew it would cost me, because I was shifting the content of the course. For example, when discussing diverse English, especially Black English in class, students used words such as informal, uneducated, unprofessional, and ghetto to describe Black language. I asked follow up questions about why they used these terms, and they replied they were taught this perspective at home and in schools. Students' comments are examples of eradicationist perspectives and pedagogies in which Black language is not treated as a language (Baker-Bell, 2020b, Labov, 1970; Paris, 2012). Many preservice teachers consistently stated that it is only a dialect or vernacular. As Kendrick spits, I consistently exercised *temptation and patience* when introducing them to Black English as a language. Students described Black language as linguistically, morally, and intellectually inferior (Baker-Bell, 2020b). They also reiterated that they were in the course to learn how to improve their writing and speaking of wME, not to learn about diverse English and/or linguistic justice. However, *but all-in-all, my productivity had stayed urgent*. I designed course activities that would meet the expectations of the course by interrogating wME and centering the importance of linguistic justice in action. I enacted linguistic justice through diverse English literature circles, diverse English language presentations, diverse English mini-lessons, and reflections.

Diverse English Literature Circles

Researchers argue that despite research on diverse English, preservice teachers leave teacher education programs without learning about them as rule-based linguistic systems (Baker-Bell, 2020b; Haddix, 2015; Johnson, 2018). The lack of awareness and exposure to diverse English, especially Black language, contributes to anti-Blackness in preservice teachers' attitudes in the teaching, learning, and understanding of grammar and language (Baker-Bell, 2020a). Baker-Bell (2020b) argues that the field of

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language and literacy needs antiracist linguistic pedagogies and linguistic justice in ELA classrooms and teacher education. I addressed this by exposing preservice teachers to diverse English through literature circles (see appendix). The literature circle assignment was two-fold:

> 1) Preservice teachers engaged in unpacking their experiences with learning wME and grammar, analyzed the grammar and language of a family or community member, unpacked their perceptions of diverse English languages, specifically Black Language, explored diverse English within their everyday life, and explored how grammar and language should be taught in a way that doesn't enact linguistic violence.
>
> 2) They read a text that illustrated a diverse English language they were interested in exploring. Their options included: Black English, Appalachian English, Spanglish, and Asian English. They read the texts: *Heavy* by Kiese Laymon, *The Brief & Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* by Junot Diaz, *Hillbilly Elegy* by J.D. Vance[5], and *Crying in H-Mart* by Michelle Zauner.

Engaging in a diverse English language literature circle enacts linguistic justice and is an example of antiracist Black language pedagogy, as it places them at the center of grammar and language education. Exposing students to diverse English, specifically Black English, is a counter hegemonic tool (Morrell, 2005), as I was explicit about the role of language and literacy in disrupting the existing power of wME in language and grammar courses. I was also intentional in utilizing texts in the course that do not illustrate wME. Shipp (2017) argues for ELA educators to shift from 'required text' to focusing on the urgent need for consciousness and activism from students. The goal should be to dismantle and disrupt dominant texts while using language and literacy to elevate marginalized and minoritized communities in society and K-20 educational spaces (Shipp, 2017).

This assignment not only demonstrates linguistic justice and antiracist Black language pedagogy but critical race English education (Johnson, 2018). Critical race English education celebrates and welcomes multiple languages (such as diverse English), literacies, and modalities that are reflective of freedom in language and societal changes. Engaging in the literature circles to explore diverse English languages provided the opportunity for students to engage in "the process of reading texts in an active, reflective manner in order to better understand power, inequality, and injustice in human relationships and contexts" (Boutte, 2015, p. 79). This is evident in the questions posed in the assignment in the appendix. The reflection questions for the diverse English literature circle not only expected students to read the text, but read the world (Freire, 1970), specifically, the ways language and grammar is taught to uphold white supremacy and white linguistic hegemony. Students were expected to interrogate and disrupt the ways in which language and grammar are taught in K-20 classrooms. This assignment is a step towards working at the intersection of English education, specifically in grammar and language courses, to honor the literacies of Black people and disrupt linguistic violence in those spaces (Haddix, 2015; Kirkland, 2013; Morrell, 2005; Paris, 2012; Sealey-Ruiz, 2016).

Diverse English Presentations

5 I am aware that this text is offensive for some Appalachian communities. In the future, this text will not be utilized. I will research other texts that the Appalachian community believes positively represents their communities.

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Figure 1

Diverse English Presentation Co-Created Rubric

Diverse English	**Names:**	
Details	**Notes**	**Points**
• Read the articles assigned on the day of your presentation that focuses on your diverse English • Present the details from the assigned readings		_____/40 points
• Add one more article/video/etc about your topic		_____/10 points
• Brief Synopsis of your assigned book thus far		_____/10 points
• Background & History about your Diverse English (Asset Perspective)		_____/30 points
• 20 mins (Everyone must speak & participate) • Engaging • Creative		_____/10 points

Note. Rubric was co-created by students during the Spring 2022 course.

It wasn't enough for students to engage in a literature circle discussion and analysis of the book illustrating their diverse English, so they also shared background information about their diverse English with their peers. Preservice teachers were given the opportunity to research the diverse English they were exploring in their literature circle, read articles assigned to the course about their diverse English, share some details about their literature circle text, and most importantly, provide background knowledge to their peers about the diverse English they were studying. While I provided parameters for preservice teachers, I allowed them to develop a rubric of how they wanted to be evaluated on their work (Figure 1). Students were expected to be active participants in co-creating the rubric, to provide practice in developing rubrics and assessments within their future classrooms.

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Figure 2

Diverse English Tik-Tok Video/Instagram Reel Co-Created Rubric

Details	Notes	Points
Content of TikTok/Reel: ☐ Begin by displaying an overall introduction to the language then narrow it to the main idea ☐ Focus on a specific rule, going more in depth, explaining the grammatical structure, providing examples, and providing visuals to aid in understanding. ☐ Make connection to the Diverse English Assigned Book		**50 points**
Structure of the TikTok/Reel: 1-3 ☐ minutes ☐ Smooth Transitions ☐ Main Idea is Clear & Concise ☐ At least one person from the group narrates the TikTok/Reel		**5 points**
TikTok/Reel Creativity: ☐ Utilize at least three of the examples: Images, ☐ Whiteboard, Videos, Music, Graphics, Memes ☐ Aesthetically Flows & Pleasing ☐ Creativity should be a distraction from the content		**25 points**
Accountability: ☐ Each person can articulate how he/she contributed to the ideas, structure, creativity and execution of the TikTok/Reel ☐ Submit an additional document that articulates what each person contributed to the project (roles & responsibilities)		**10 points**
Assessment Creation: ☐ Include 3-5 multiple choice questions ☐ Measure understanding of the content by students answering 50% of the questions correctly ☐ Ensure that Dr. P. is a collaborator on the Google form to view responses		**10 points**

Note. Rubric was co-created by students during the Spring 2022 course.

This assignment enacts linguistic justice and antiracist Black language pedagogy, as it does not center wME as the standard for Black speakers, or for any speakers for that matter. Students were consistently reminded that they could speak in their own language and/or mother tongue (Tan, 1990) in discussions during class and during their presentations. Students diverse English literacies,

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lives, spirits, languages, cultures, and knowledge were affirmed. Although a presentation, oral histories, storytelling, and music were centered.

Diverse English Mini-Lesson: TikTok Video/Instagram Reel

I taught English Language: Grammar and Usage two years in a row. I used the feedback from the first year of students to improve the course. One area of improvement that they suggested was that they learned a lot about Black English, and were introduced to Appalachian English, Spanglish, and Asian English. However, they wanted more. They wanted to learn how to apply their learning and teach diverse English in their future classrooms. So, I developed a mini-lesson assignment that would allow them to learn about a grammatical rule or structure within the diverse English they explored and teach it to their peers using TikTok or an Instagram Reel. Again, in preparing preservice teachers to teach in classrooms, it was essential that they continue to practice creating rubrics to assess their learning and performance. The preservice teachers worked collaboratively to create the rubric (Figure 2) and develop their videos.

Utilizing multimedia tools to demonstrate learning demonstrates linguistic justice as it deconstructs canonical literature, white ways of knowing, being and learning, and wME. It provides the opportunity for students to create their own texts (media, art, and film) that can be used to disrupt linguistic violence in future ELA classrooms (Johnson, 2018; Morrell, 2005).

Writing Analysis Paper Remix

Although I adapted the curriculum to center Blackness and diverse English, there were still aspects of the course that I had to keep aligned to department standards. One element I had to keep was a writing assignment that had students analyze and revise their writing based on wME. I adapted the writing assignment, to provide the opportunity for students to revise or rewrite a section of their paper in their mother tongue (Tan, 1990) or a diverse English. The prompt stated:

> Take any one paragraph section of your paper in the Appendix, rewrite the paragraph in your mother tongue. How would you take this paragraph and insert your "swag" and personality? In the comments, provide three notes about how writing in your mother tongue provides the opportunity for you to insert your "whole" self in your writing.

In most students' analysis, they found that they were not given the opportunity to show up as their full selves in their writing, and they were writing to please their professors, not explore their own creativity, family, community, culture, and "swag." This is an example of linguistic justice as it centers diverse English languages in writing. This writing assignment moves beyond just correcting grammar and language, and toward educating students on how to use their words and "pens as epistemic weapons to speak back/against racial oppression and marginalization" in their writing (Johnson, 2018).

Reflection: The Heart Part 5

At the end of my second semester teaching English Language: Grammar and Usage, literally the day before our last class together, Kendrick dropped the song and video *The Heart Part 5*. As an educator who would classify some of my work as Hip Hop Pedagogy (Adjapong, 2017), I immediately connected the song and video to what I was teaching. I incorporate Black music and Black artists in the course to engage students in critical discussions pertaining to racial and linguistic inequities (Johnson, 2018; Shipp, 2017). It is an unapologetic and unashamed approach to centering Blackness, Black Joy, Black Creativity, Black Love, Black Excellence, Black Artistic Expression, and Black Language (Johnson, 2018).

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While watching the video over and over, I made connections to the lyrics and the ways that grammar and language courses enact linguistic violence. At the end of every course I've ever taught, I provide the opportunity for students to share what has gone well in the course and what I can do better to prepare for the students I will teach the following semester. Students are also given the opportunity to reflect upon the content of the course and ways in which they will enact linguistic justice in their future classrooms. I trusted that the work of Kendrick would give us light and direction for our final reflection and provide a course of action for preservice teachers moving forward in teaching grammar and language. The reflection assignment is illustrated in Figure 3.

Students were expected to identify lyrics that stood out to them while listening to and watching the video. The students made connections to Kendrick's interpretation of the culture and related it to the culture of wME. Finally, students reflected upon how Kendrick's theme helps us understand the importance of diverse English in classrooms. In the reflection, and during our classroom discussions, we shifted beyond the exclusive focus on wME in language and grammar to acknowledging the need for personal consciousness, activism, and accountability to enact linguistic justice (Baker-Bell, 2020a; Shipp, 2017).

Conclusion

Face your fears, always knew that I would make it here
Where the energy is magnified and persevered
Consciousness is synchronized and crystal-clear
Euphoria is glorified and made His
Reflectin' on my life and what I done
Paid dues, made rules, change outta love
Them same views made schools change curriculums
But didn't change me starin' down the barrel of that gun

In the final reflection of the course, many students leaned in and allowed Kendrick to usher us into the work of linguistic justice. *Face your fears, always knew that I would make it here, Where the energy is magnified and persevered, Consciousness is synchronized and crystal clear, Euphoria is glorified and made His…*While a risk to continue to push back on wME and center Blackness, I always knew that my students had the potential to embrace diverse English languages and linguistic justice. I faced my fears and trusted that with each class session where I centered Blackness, we would get a step closer to enacting linguistic justice. Throughout the semester, I listened to their anti-Black comments and the need and desire to elevate wME. This moment of reflection and revelation made my *consciousness synchronized and clear* that regardless of the backlash that I received, I would push forward in this work.

I *paid dues, made rules, change outta love/Them same views made me change the curriculum*, to ensure that I would demonstrate linguistic justice in action. However, being a Black faculty member enacting linguistic justice in the classroom would not *change me starin' down the barrel of the gun…* meaning I would receive negative feedback on evaluations because of the disruption of wME. For example, on my evaluation, students wrote statements such as, "I thought I signed up for a grammar class, but it was about 80 percent diverse English and 20 percent mainstream English grammar that would help me in an essay." Richardson (2003) attests to students' sentiments of wanting to learn standardized American English conventions and to become skilled rhetors. However, their desires are not neutral practices isolated from a history of power relations and politics of literacy. As Love (2019) argues, one thing about whiteness is that it will always center itself. I am not naïve enough to believe that all students will embrace linguistic justice in the classroom. I must be honest about the realities of

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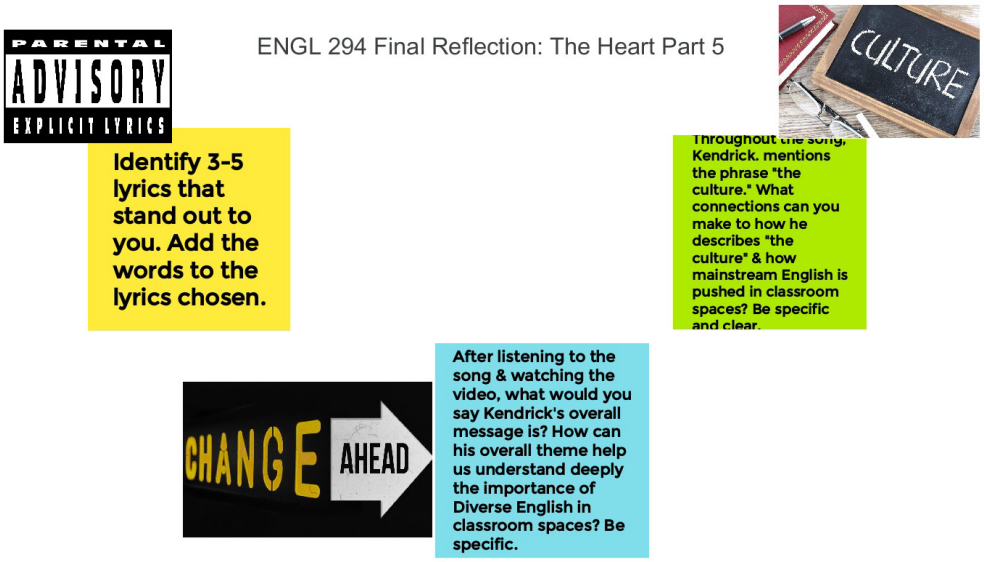
Figure 3

ENGL294 Final Reflection: The Heart 5



Note. Reflection assignment completed in Spring 2022 course.

being a Black faculty member who decides to embark upon this journey. This leads me to the implications for English educators in K-20 spaces. I will allow Kendrick to lead us in our final reflections of how English educators (K-20) can ensure that they not only say that they are about justice-oriented work but put it into action.

Implications

*In the land where hurt people hurt more people/F*** callin' it culture*. I can literally hear the critics, naysayers, and respectable folx in my ear saying, "How will we prepare Black students for the real world? Furthermore, how will we prepare our white students to write?

Baker-Bell (2020a) put it best:

> If y'all actually believe that using "standard English" will dismantle white supremacy, then you not paying attention! If we, as teachers, truly believe that code-switching will dismantle white supremacy, we have a problem. If we honestly believe that code-switching will save Black people's lives, then we really ain't paying attention to what's happening in the world. Eric Garner was choked to death by a police officer while saying "I cannot breathe." Wouldn't you consider "I cannot breathe" "standard English" syntax? (p. ix)

We have to move past calling wME *culture,* as the enforcement of it has caused hurt people (racist, anti-Black people) to hurt more people. This is not the *culture* we want to embrace anymore. It doesn't work for everyone. The enforcement of wME and dismissing diverse English is rooted in the oppression of others. Period full stop.

Keep that genius in your brain on the move. One thing I loved about disrupting wME in this course is my ability to show up as my full self, creatively. Without the restrictions of wME and its enforcement, I was able to invite diverse English, different languages, and cultures into the classroom. It literally kept *my genius in my brain on the move*. When we let go of what is deemed standard, it makes room for us to explore other creative aspects of who we are. Show up

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as your full self in the classroom and continue to interrogate what you teach and deem as knowledge.

Look for salvation when troubles get real/'Cause you can't help the world until you help yourself. This is for my educators who are doing the work of justice. This journey will get real. You will be tested, pushed, and discredited; especially if you are Black. Anti-Blackness is endemic (Warren & Cole, 2020) and is prevalent everywhere. However, *look for salvation when it gets real*; find ways to refuel and take care of yourself in this work. Rest is revolutionary and you can't do this work if you don't take care of yourself.

Should I feel resentful I didn't see my full potential?
Should I feel regret about the good that I was into?
Everything is everything, this ain't coincidental
I woke up that mornin' with more heart to give you
As I bleed through the speakers, feel my presence
I want you

I am no longer beating myself up for not teaching only Black students. I know one day, I will be able to work directly with Black students and teachers again. I don't *feel resentful* that I didn't meet my *full potential* in an all-Black school and/or community. I strongly believe that *everything is coincidental;* I am where I am supposed to be—centering Blackness in English education. I have used what I have learned growing up in Winton Terrace, teaching in Maryland, and existing in white-dominated spaces to improve my being, teaching, and learning (Porcher, 2021), and I still have *more heart to give you. As I bleed through these* pages, feel my vulnerability, heart, and presence. *I want you…yea, you,* to want linguistic justice in English language arts classrooms. The *want* for justice in all spaces won't change for me. I don't have a choice. My Black skin, culture, excellence, joy, creativity, and humanity won't let me settle for nothing less.

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Appendix

Diverse English Literature Circle Assignment

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Diverse English Language Literature Circle

You will have the opportunity to read collaboratively with your peers, one of the books (Heavy, Hillbilly Elegy, Crying in H-Mart, Brief & Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao) to explore diverse English. You will also explore your own experiences with diverse English. Each week, you will engage in prompts that Dr. Porcher pose, along with the questions posed by the discussion facilitator. Each person in the group will serve as the discussion facilitator; developing questions for group discussion. The facilitator will pose three questions that highlight: 1.
Personal responses to the chapters assigned; 2. Connection to the diverse English you are studying; and 3. Challenge your understanding of how grammar should be taught.

KISHA PORCHER JAN 23, 2022 05:28AM

Week One 2/10: Identity & Experiences with Grammar

Photo

Capture/Locate an authentic photo that illustrates a pivotal moment that you had with learning grammar. Provide a caption that describes the photo. Do not use a photo from google.

Video Reflection

Use the video option and respond to the following question: What was your rst experience with learning grammar and/or speaking mainstream English? Include as many details as you can remember. After you create your post, respond to at least one person in your group. If someone has already responded to a group member, choose someone else.

Week Two 2/15: Identity & Experiences with Grammar

Photo

Capture/Locate an authentic photo that illustrates your home community and/or community at UD. This photo can be a photo of your friends/family.

Audio Reflection

Record a conversation with a family member or close friend. What do you notice about the language and grammar used in the conversation. Does it re ect your understanding of mainstream English? Reference at least two of the readings from the Archeology of Self section of the syllabus. After you create your post, respond to at least one person in your group. If someone has already responded to a group member, choose someone else.

Week Two 2/17: Literature Circle Discussion 1

Discussion Expectations

Each person in the group will serve as the discussion facilitator; developing questions for group discussion. The facilitator will pose three questions that highlight: 1. Personal responses to the chapters assigned; 2. Connection to the diverse English you are studying; and 3. Challenge your understanding of how grammar should be taught. Ensure that you respond to at least one person in the group. Avoid responding to the same person. Ensure every person has a response.

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Week Three 2/22: Literature Circle Discussion 2

Discussion Expectations

Each person in the group will serve as the discussion facilitator; developing questions for group discussion. The facilitator will pose three questions that highlight: 1. Personal responses to the chapters assigned; 2. Connection to the diverse English you are studying; and 3. Challenge your understanding of how grammar should be taught. Ensure that you respond to at least one person in the group. Avoid responding to the same person. Ensure every person has a response.

Week Four 3/1: Literature Circle Discussion 3

Discussion Expectations

Each person in the group will serve as the discussion facilitator; developing questions for group discussion. The facilitator will pose three questions that highlight: 1. Personal responses to the chapters assigned; 2. Connection to the diverse English you are studying; and 3. Challenge your understanding of how grammar should be taught. Ensure that you respond to at least one person in the group. Avoid responding to the same person. Ensure every person has a response.

Week Five 3/8: Students & People of Color Experiences with Grammar

Photo

Capture/Upload an authentic photo that illustrates your perceptions and understanding of students/people of color use of mainstream English and grammar. Be honest and transparent here.

Written Reflection

Respond to the following questions: What do you know about the home grammar(s) and language of Black and Brown people/students? Where do you see the language and grammar(s) of Black and Brown people used? After you create your post, respond to at least one person in your group. If someone has already responded to a group member, choose someone else.

Week Five 3/10: Literature Circle Discussion 4

Discussion Expectations

Each person in the group will serve as the discussion facilitator; developing questions for group discussion. The facilitator will pose three questions that highlight: 1. Personal responses to the chapters assigned; 2. Connection to the diverse English you are studying; and 3. Challenge your understanding of how grammar should be taught. Ensure that you respond to at least one person in the group. Avoid responding to the same person. Ensure every person has a response.

Week Six 3/15: Students of Color Experiences with Grammar

Photo

Capture and upload a photo of diverse English languages and grammars throughout your community, on television, in stores, etc. Pay close attention when you are at stores, watching your favorite tv shows, etc.

Written Reflection

What do you notice about the examples of diverse languages and grammar around your community in comparison to mainstream English? Reference at least two text from the section of the course: Exploration of the Lived Experiences, Assets & Grammar of Diverse Communities. After you create your post, respond to at least one person in your group. If someone has already responded to a group member, choose someone else.

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Week Seven 3/22 Literature Circle Discussion 5

Discussion Expectations

Each person in the group will serve as the discussion facilitator; developing questions for group discussion. The facilitator will pose three questions that highlight: 1. Personal responses to the chapters assigned; 2. Connection to the diverse English you are studying; and 3. Challenge your understanding of how grammar should be taught. Ensure that you respond to at least one person in the group. Avoid responding to the same person. Ensure every person has a response.

Week Seven 4/5: Literature Discussion 6

Discussion Expectations

How should students' grammars and languages be centered and elevated in classroom practices? How can the standard be in action not just acknowledged or tolerated? Reference your assigned book. How could your book be use to elevate diverse English.

Each person in the group will serve as the discussion facilitator; developing questions for group discussion. The facilitator will pose "inclusive" three questions that highlight: 1. Personal responses to the chapters assigned; 2. Connection to the diverse English you are studying; and 3. Challenge your understanding of how grammar should be taught. Ensure that you respond to at least one person in the group. Avoid responding to the same person. Ensure every person has a response.

Week Eight 4/7: Reimagining Grammar & Usage in ELA Classrooms, College Classrooms & Society

Photo

Capture and upload a photo that highlights how grammar should be taught in universities or K-12 schools.

Video Reflection