

Honors Thesis Proposal

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My research will investigate and design debate curricula for Secondary English educators and classrooms to empower students to use their own voices that will also train educators to value and respect those voices. I will be producing a literature review and a set of secondary curricula based on that literature.

Debate as an educational practice has the potential to radically empower students. Debate forces students to recontextualize topics and evidence in light of new ideas and their experiences. A well-designed debate curriculum could very easily affirm students' language varieties, cultural modes of expression, rhetorics, and lived experience. However, in my experience, and according to Polson (2012), academic debate is less than welcoming of diverse students and their language varieties. I argue that this is due in large part to un- or under-trained educators applying the "banking model" of education (Friere, 1968/1970) and ideologies about language (Lippi-Green, 2011) to their debate curricula. My work will seek to address this problem using insights from the Education and Literacy literatures to design curricula for both students and educators.

The Multicultural Education () and Literacy Studies () literature . . . Under a Literacy Framework, students are encouraged to recontextualize course material in light of their lived experience. This approach validates the student's experience and removes the educator as the sole epistemic authority. The Multicultural Education literature challenges the teaching of Standardized English, instead pushing us to value students' native language varieties and the modes in which they are already adept at expressing themselves ("Students' Right to Their Own Language", 1974).

References

- Friere, P. (1970). *Pedagogia do oprimido* [The pedagogy of the oppressed] (M. B. Ramos, Trans.). Continuum. (Original work published 1968)
- Lippi-Green, R. (2011). *English with an accent: Language, ideology, and discrimination in the United States*. Routledge.
- Polson, D. (2012). “*Longing for theory:*” *performance debate in action* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Maryland, Baltimore County.
- Students’ right to their own language. (1974). *College Composition and Communication*, XXV.