

Jessi's Code-Meshing Day!

*AKA: Talk however you want, I don't care.
No, wait, I do care.*

By Jessi Johnson

Note from Jessi: The purpose of this exercise is to teach students to identify linguistic discrimination -- a necessity to build their confidence in their own voice, since many students face this type of discrimination when their voice, writing, or codes don't match the traditional "standards" of "academia". By calling out discrimination, students increase agency and learn to equally value their codes. This leads to a discussion about code-meshing, and the next important tool in increasing student agency and authority. Included are exercises to learn the difference between code-switching (which is a common practice but one that can lead to linguistic discrimination) and code-meshing (to teach them to value their languages/voices/writing equally and learn to use them to heighten meaning and deepen understanding in their own writing).

We first began with two ideas: SWE is a tool created by colonization. Code-meshing is one way of breaking, subverting, or decolonizing that tool. "You cannot break the master's house with the master's tools." -- Audre Lorde

(We then discuss as a class)

1. What is colonization?
2. How is language part of colonization?
3. How was language used to control some people and reward others?
4. How do we see that in the classroom?

Linguistic Discrimination

- Unfair treatment and stigmatization based on use of language and/or grammar
- May include use of a person's native language, accent, dialect, colloquialisms, vocabulary, syntax, jargon, slang
- Ability or inability to use one language or code over another
- Forming automatic and/or stereotyped judgements about another person's wealth, social status, education, character, etc.
- These perceptions can lead to unfair treatment



- Also related to linguicism: using language to legitimize unequal treatment of people – either favoring or abusing certain peoples based on the way they speak or present codes
- While anyone can be a victim of linguistic discrimination, oppressed and marginalized groups and social minorities are the most consistent targets

When are times you've noticed or experienced linguistic discrimination?

(Below are students' responses)

- I'm British, and we judge people immediately based on where their accent comes from. We say that we can tell in just 3 seconds everything about you once you open your mouth.
- As a gay man, I carefully watch my intonations – they change depending on whether I'm with my friends or with my fraternity brothers
- Sometimes, I try to hide my Latinx accent or only use Spanish words at home
- People think Black people are "thugs" or dumb because we have our own way of speaking
- If you don't speak "professionally", you won't get a good job
- Writing 150! *(This was a real answer!)*

Code-Switching

- Switching your linguistic style to speak to people of different backgrounds
- Changing the way you speak or present yourself, entirely dependent on whom you're speaking to
- Can be related to the Mirror Effect

Questions for you!

1. Why do we code-switch?
2. When is it good?
3. When is it problematic?

(Videos we watch in class, depending on time)

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IhJ_5Je3oEY
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nopWOC4SRm4>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LmnqihRlcal&list=FLRB2XFcy2rumoDi3jWPBSWg&index=3&t=0s>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QNbdn0yuUw8>

Code-Meshing

- Speak to a variety of audiences (ex: speaking to student and staff together)
- Bring together different parts of your own identity in writing, speaking, presentation, etc.

- Equally valuing all of your codes and identities
- Writing the way you speak

WHEN TO USE CODE-MESHING

- Whenever the heck you want! But also:
- To call out gatekeeping
- To celebrate identity/identities
- To heighten understanding of the topic/argument
- To expand meaning for the reader
- To increase pathos (shared emotions), ethos (your authority), logos (depth of analysis/perspectives)
- To bring in multiple perspectives
- To create a broader view of language
- To create a bridge through language
- To create a negotiation between the writer and reader
- To foster authenticity for you, the writer
- To show mastery of multiple languages and perspectives
- To use your identity as a tool for heightening understanding (instead of someone else's identity or standardization)
- To forge a new path

Ask yourself – does using my authentic languages and identities:

- Help the reader understand the argument better?
 - Mesh my voice with their voice to create a bridge of understanding?
 - Show my deep understanding of multiple perspectives; increase pathos, ethos, or logos?
 - Make me feel like myself, thus letting me trust my own voice?
- (This section inspired by Stephanie Payne's work)

(Videos we watch depending on time)

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OlrED9k5tmM&t=21s>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=488ZBeaGo6s>

Dr. Vershawn Ashanti Young

- Professor of English and African American Studies
- Proliferator of Codemeshing in academia
- Keynote speaker at the CCCC 2019

Dr. Jamila Lysicott

- Assistant Professor of Social Justice Education at Amherst

- Senior Research Fellow at Columbia University

“3 Ways to Speak English”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k9fmJ5xQ_mc

(Students are put into small groups and answer these questions together)

1. Jamila considers herself “tri-lingual”? Would you agree?
2. Why does she consider it important that she be identified as “tri-lingual”?
3. What is a language?
4. What are your ways of speaking?
5. Based on Jamila’s argument, would you consider yourself “bi” or “tri” lingual?
6. How do you speak to your friends? How do you speak to your parents/family? How do you speak to a significant other? To a boss?
7. Is there more value in one of those ways of speaking, or does each have value?
8. Does value change?

Jessi’s Grading Rubric Day!

AKA: Code-meshing Day Part 2 (haha you thought we were done)

By Jessi Johnson

Note from Jesse: This section is to create a grading rubric with students. Grading rubrics have traditionally been punitive tools to keep students in line with the “standardization of academia” -- which is historically based in whiteness and some racist practices. When students are punished via grades and feedback for not standardizing to only one way of speaking and writing, they can lose agency, authority, and confidence; they also come to believe that some ways of speaking/writing are “smart” and other ways are “dumb” -- a dangerous precedent. The grading rubric below works with students so they can choose how their codes will be valued and what professional writing means for them and their goals. It’s meant to increase their agency and authority in their work; to make them active participants in their own learning. It is also meant to help de-colonize the classroom by shifting from a product-oriented punitive rubric to an idea-oriented rewards-based rubric. It changes the standards of “ethos, pathos, and logos” to “Truth, Voice, and Beauty”.

Some questions for you! *(Students provide answers for questions below in large group. Below are samples of student answers)*

If PATHOS is an emotional connection, how does code-meshing play into that?

- Celebrating identity
- Relatability
- Connection with culture

If LOGOS is analysis and evidence, how does that relate to code-meshing?

- Heighten understanding or deepen meaning
- New perspectives used for analysis
- Create broader, deeper, or more unique view
- Meshing your voice with reader's voice to create a bridge

If ETHOS is credibility or trustworthiness, how is code-meshing part of that?

- Increases agency
- Increases authority (you know what you're talking about)
- Relatability
- Guide readers through discomfort
- Understand your own role in the greater context

Let's Create A Grading Rubric!

As a class, we fill out a rubric based on three pillars: Truth, Voice, and Beauty. (I know, they're Platonic, but hear me out!)

Just three. But three that deeply encapsulate what it means to be a writer. And that "meaning" will be up to you, as a class.

Code-meshing is the foundation of the classroom. Code-meshing affirms your agency by encouraging you to trust your own voice. Code-meshing also helps de-colonize the classroom!

We will be building our class rubric together, based on three pillars. We will fill out the meaning of these "pillars" together. You are active participants in your learning. What do you want to uphold? What do you want others to keep in mind when they review your work? What do you ME to measure your work against?

(Empty rubric is below -- I also have examples of filled in rubrics from various classes)

Truth	Voice	Beauty

In addition to a rubric for the class, you will also fill out a rubric (with the same pillars) about ME, your teacher. (Still keeping code-meshing at the forefront of your mind.) How will you measure me in this class? I am also an active participant in your learning! What standards do you want to hold me to, as an active participant? Are there biases you want me to acknowledge? What does Truth, Voice, and Beauty mean when applied to your teacher?"