

The background image is a photograph of a modern university building with large glass windows and a curved facade. In the foreground, there is a paved walkway and a landscaped area with a low concrete wall and some trees. The entire image has a blue color overlay.

University of Houston  Clear Lake

THE CRITICALITY OF DEVELOPING STUDENTS' VOICE IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

Regan Joswiak, Director, UHCL Writing
Center

Carole Flad, Professional Tutor
University of Houston-Clear Lake

Objectives

This Roundtable Discussion Asks:

In the non-space of writing centers, how can writing center professionals assure writers that developing their voice will continue to be a priority regardless of current political, social or economic environments?

Writing centers must first explore:

- undergraduate striving writers' difficulties.
- Writing centers' roles in addressing these difficulties and helping writers develop their voice.

Will faculty / writing center collaborations, leveraging the Critical Literacy Theory, result in students experiencing positive writing outcomes?



Assessing Needs of Undergraduate Striving Writers

Key findings from faculty anecdotal evidence:

- Undergraduate students experience challenges articulating their voice during scholarly sources' reviews
- Specifically:
 - Little exposure to writing genres that strengthen vocabulary, content terminology, research, citations, and critical thinking (Gennrich & Dison, 2018)
 - Reflecting on content and embedding their position withing content (Gennrich & Dison, 2018)
 - Difficulty transforming colloquial language to academic language (called formal register) (Academic Writing in English, 2011)

Reflections for Writing Centers

Students anecdotally convey fear, uncertainty, and doubt due to current political, social and economic environments ("anonymous informants, 1,2,3, 4, 5")

- Voice in literacy can be empowering and may alleviate fear that this students are experiences.
- Voice, agency and advocacy can be achieved through Critical Literacy writing (Steward, 2013 as cited in Lee et al., 2021, p. 497))
- Do writing centers have a role to affect an outcome?
- Some students do not have a strong foundation in academic writing
 - Must be addressed to achieve voice in writing
 - Effective writing is imperative for successful academic, and [personal]careers (Goodson, 2013; Steward, 2013 as cited in Lee et al., 2021, p. 497))
 - Fosters students' voice, agency, and advocacy (Goodson, 2013; Steward, 2013 as cited in Lee et al., 2021, p. 497))
- How do writing centers bridge the gap between students' writing difficulties, including developing voice, and writing center offerings?

Case Study: Juntos (Together) North Carolina Writing Project

- Juntos NC Writing Project, part of Literacy and Community Initiative involved young writers who experienced literacy engagement that led to youth activism and civic engagement (Kumasi & Hughes-Hassell, 2017 as cited in Lee et al., 2021)
- Leveraged Critical Literacy principles and strategies to explore and deconstruct texts and drew on their personal experiences for the purpose of empowerment and advocacy for social justice.
- Collaboration resulted in a published book and relaying their stories at a conference.

Question: Can writing centers build upon the Juntos Project which leverages the Critical Literacy Theory so that students can experience positive writing outcomes?

Critical Literacy Pedagogy Framework

Critical Literacy Pedagogy is:	
Relevant	• Designing the class and curriculum to be relevant and inclusive of students' identities, lives, experiences, cultures, and current events.
Reflexive	• Acknowledging, exploring, and/or learning about one's biases, as well as how to bracket those biases.
Deconstructive	• Deconstructing or dissecting texts, videos, or other media to look at the language features; authorial bias, intent, and purpose; as well as the way the text, video, or media might perpetuate grand cultural narratives. Also involves working to deconstruct these grand cultural narratives.
Dialogic	• Exploring literacy as a social practice by exploring multiple perspectives and meanings of a text or media. In particular, this exploration may occur through dialogue and questioning.
Empowering	• Examining issues of power in text, media, classroom, school, and/or society in order to counter deficit mindsets and empower students.
Transformative	• Considering how texts, media, and/or society can be transformed to be more equitable and creating opportunities for social action.
Intersectional	• Involves intersecting the six previous themes, as well as considering how systems of oppression, such as race, class, and gender, interact in texts, media, the classroom, and/or society.

Roundtable Discussion

This Roundtable Discussion Asks:

In the non-space of writing centers, how can writing center professionals assure writers that developing their voice will continue to be a priority regardless of current political, social or economic environments?

Key Takeaways

1.
2.
3.

References

- Academic Writing in English (2011). *Register types*. Lund University. <https://www.awelu.lu.se/language/register-and-style/register-types/>
- Gennrich, T., & Dison, L. (2018). Voice matters: Students' struggle to find voice. *Reading and Writing – Journal of the Reading Association of South Africa*. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1197055.pdf>
- Goodson, P. (2013). *Becoming an academic writer: 50 exercises for paced, productive, and powerful writing*. Sage
- Lee, C.C. , Dufresne, K.V. & Relyea, J.E. (2021). "They are doers": Writing to advocate with immigrant youth in community-based organizations. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 64(5), 497-509. <https://ila-onlinelibrary-wiley-com.uhcl.idm.oclc.org/doi/full/10.1002%2Fjaal.1131>
- Medlock Paul, C. (2018). *Critical literacy pedagogy: Establishing the factors of critical literacy instruction through a mixed methods approach* [Doctoral dissertation, North Carolina State University. <https://repository.lib.ncsu.edu/bitstreams/6ffd55b3-ff42-4e55-8587-382dedcbc0f3/download>
- Medlock Paul, C. (2021, November 25). Competing paradigms: Employing quantitative methods to operationalize and validate a pedagogy of critical literacy. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 57(3), 937-955. <https://ila-onlinelibrary-wiley-com.uhcl.idm.oclc.org/doi/full/10.1002%2Frrq.453>
- Quible, Z.K. & Grffin (2007). Are writing deficiencies creating a lost generation of business writers? *Journal of Education for Business*. <https://research-ebSCO-com.uhcl.idm.oclc.org/c/kxacil/search/advanced/publications/JEB?selectedDb=a9hjnh&isDashboardExpanded=true>

Scan this code for links to the IWCA booklet and presentation, found on the Events page of UHCL Writing Center website.

