



English 3740: Language in the Elementary School

Summer 1 2009, MW 12:00-2:20 p.m. in Brown 3045

Instructor: Dr. Lisa Minnick

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Office hours: By appointment

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Course Web Page: <http://www.retroflexive.com/3740main>

Course description, purpose, and objectives:

The key objective of English 3740 is to introduce pre-service elementary school teachers to the structure, history, and use of the English language so that they will be able to work successfully in their own classrooms with children from diverse linguistic backgrounds. To achieve this goal, the course focuses closely on language variation and language attitudes, with attention to both theory and practice. Students will be introduced to what every teacher needs to know about how language works, including an introduction to the discipline of linguistics as well as its applications to language arts teaching. Additionally, English 3740 focuses on specific ways to apply this theoretical knowledge to classroom practices aimed at improving literacy outcomes for elementary school students, especially including those who speak (and write) non-mainstream varieties of English, which have traditionally been stigmatized and whose speakers sometimes are left to slip through the cracks of the educational system.

Students who complete English 3740 successfully will acquire an understanding of the following: 1.) key terms and concepts associated with the discipline of linguistics; 2.) fundamentals of the history and structure of the English language as they impact the teaching of writing and grammar; 3.) how and why language changes, and why language change matters to teachers; 4.) how language variation is patterned and the educational implications of variation; and 5.) specific practices for use in elementary teaching, particularly in the teaching of writing.

Prerequisite: English 3690. Because English 3740 focuses on linguistic issues, including as they impact the teaching of writing, the knowledge and experience students acquire in 3690 in writing development, instruction, and assessment will be applicable and relevant.

Texts:

Adger, Wolfram, and Christian, *Dialects in Schools and Communities*, 2nd edition (2007).

Wheeler and Swords, *Code-Switching: Teaching Standard English in Urban Classrooms* (2006).

Additionally, online readings may occasionally be assigned.

Course requirements and assignments:

Teaching practice project (final)	30%
Language variation project (midterm)	25%
Quizzes	20%
Homework and daily activities	15%
Attendance and participation	10%

All assignments must be completed to earn a passing grade. Graded assignments will generally be returned within one to two weeks.

Teaching practice project (final): Students will work together in small groups to create and present a teaching demonstration that incorporates and applies theories and practices discussed and developed this semester. This final project is a key component of the course grade and requires significant investments of work and time on each student's part. Specific guidelines and criteria will be provided for this assignment.

Language variation project (midterm): Working collaboratively, students will conduct research on a selected aspect of language variation as it applies to classroom teaching. Each group will complete a paper and present their project to the class. I will provide specific guidelines and criteria for this project.

Quizzes on readings and discussions are designed to keep everyone on track, doing the reading, and paying attention. We will have four of these, each worth 5% of the course grade. Quiz dates can be found on the Schedule of Reading and Writing Assignments included in this syllabus.

Attendance and participation: English 3740 is designed to be an active, experiential course. Your presence, attentiveness, preparedness, and active contributions are of paramount importance both to the success of the course and to your individual success in it. Students will need to complete all readings and other assignments on time in order to be ready to contribute in class. Excessive absenteeism, habitual lateness, passive attendance, not doing the reading, persistent failure to contribute to discussions, not participating in activities, and/or any other kind of slacking will not be suffered gladly and will affect participation score. Also, because of the nature of this course, the whole class will work collaboratively from day one to determine the directions we will go in over the next 8 weeks. I hope everyone will want to be a part of that collaboration, but it is also a part of your course grade.

In other words, I think English 3740 is a fun and stimulating course, but your active contribution to helping us to achieve this goal is a must. This means you need to be present and fully prepared every day to the extent that it is humanly possible. Readings, discussions, and activities complement each other and completion of all work is required. Much of this work will happen in class. Because this is an abbreviated summer session and we will thus have to move relatively quickly, and because participation is a major part of your course experience and the grading criteria, **missing more than two class meetings may be detrimental to your grade**. Exceptions can only be made in cases of serious illness (such as those requiring hospitalization) and other documentable emergencies. If you miss more than three class meetings, there will be a substantial deduction to your course grade, up to and including the possibility of a course grade of E. It is of course each student's responsibility to stay on top of all course material and assignments when a class meeting is missed by consulting the updates page online at <http://www.retroflexive.com/3740updates> and getting the notes from a classmate. Lectures and discussions missed cannot be made up in office hours or at any other time. Unauthorized departure at the break will be recorded as an absence. Habitual lateness is also an attendance issue.

Grading criteria for all assignments:

A	= 4.0 points awarded for excellent, top-quality work .
BA	= 3.5 points
B	= 3.0 points
CB	= 2.5 points
C	= 2 points
DC	= 1.5 points
D	= 1 point
E	= 0 points for work not turned in; .5 for work that does not meet minimum standards.

Instructor Policies

Late work is generally frowned upon in college and elsewhere, and this class is no exception. Arrangements need to be made *in advance* (and you'll need a documentable explanation). Unexplained late work (or excuses after the fact) will not be accepted and a grade of zero will be assessed for the assignment.

Being late to class and leaving early should be avoided. Please make it a habit to be in class on time. Students who are not in class on time risk missing important course content and create a distraction to other students and the instructor. The same goes for leaving early. Habitual lateness will result in a reduction of attendance and participation score and hence the course grade. If you are late, I recommend that you stay after class to make sure you have been marked present. Uncorrected lates count as absences.

Makeups: Discussions, presentations, and any other in-class activities cannot be made up if missed because of lateness or absence. Makeups on quizzes and other major assignments must be arranged in advance of due dates in order to avoid penalties, and students will have to make a pretty strong case in order to be granted an extension.

Classroom etiquette and controversial topics: You are encouraged to read and think critically and of course are not required to agree with everything you read or everything that is said during discussions in this class. In my experience, learning works best when an open dialogue is encouraged. Sometimes our conversations may get intense. We will be dealing with topics that are controversial and often highly charged. But I believe strongly in the educational value of

addressing these topics and the intellectual growth that comes from engaging them and thinking critically about them. All thoughtful contributions are welcome in our class discussions; I simply ask that everyone be respectful to one other. The goal is for our classroom to be a safe place for you and your classmates to flex your intellectual muscles, where everyone feels comfortable generating, expressing, and challenging ideas. Your help in reaching this goal is essential. Also, please familiarize yourself with and adhere to the WMU code of student conduct at <http://www.osc.wmich.edu/studentcode/conduct.html>. Students who unwilling or unable to abide by the code and respect the rights of everyone to a comfortable learning and teaching environment will be asked to leave.

Other etiquette issues: Sleeping, eating, grooming, reading non-course materials, doing homework, having conversations, using any kind of electronic communications device, and other such activities are prohibited because of their disruptive and impolite nature, and also because they keep students from fully participating. Active participation is part of your course grade, but also, nothing interesting will happen in class without your input. That is, the class will be as interesting as you make it. Showing up on time and prepared (that means completing all reading assignments and other homework and being ready to work when you get here) will help your grade as well as enhance your learning experience.

No recording of any kind – audio, video, photographic, or otherwise – is permitted in this class without the informed consent of all students and the instructor. Everyone in this class has a right not to have their voices and/or likenesses recorded without their knowledge and permission, including the instructor.

If you would like extra help with course material, please let me know and we can set up a time to meet. Email any time if you have questions or concerns. During the week, I try to respond within 24 hours to emails that need a response; on weekends, it may be Monday before I am able to get back to you. If you are ever not completely clear on what is being asked of you, please check with me.

Workload: The workload for English 3740 is reasonable but substantial, as appropriate for courses at the 3000 level, with challenging (and plentiful) reading assignments and frequent activities and assignments. It should go without saying that you will need to keep up with all readings and other assignments, because if you aren't prepared, you won't be able to participate in class discussions, which will be (1) boring for you (and all of us) and (2) seriously detrimental to your progress in the course.

University Policies

Academic honesty: All work you turn in for this class must be your own, with all outside reference sources properly cited and acknowledged. Plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, any kind of falsification or forgery, computer misuse, multiple submission, complicity, and any other type of academic dishonesty on any exams or work assigned for this course, will not be tolerated in any form. You are required to read and comply fully with the policies and definitions outlined in the Western Michigan University statement on academic integrity, which is available in the undergraduate and graduate student catalogs as well as online. If there is reason to believe any student has been involved in academic dishonesty, he or she will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. The student will be given the opportunity to review the charge(s) and have the opportunity for a hearing. Please consult with me if you are in doubt about how to cite a source, whether a source is appropriate to use, whether a citation is needed, if you are not sure what level of help on an assignment constitutes collusion, or with any other academic integrity questions. As I am also required to uphold the standards of academic integrity, my policy is zero tolerance for any type of deception, and I do not want for any of you to find out the hard way how seriously I take this.

Religious Observances Policy: The University is a diverse, multicultural enterprise and, as a community, we jointly embrace both individual responsibility and dignified respect for our differences. It is our general policy to permit students to fulfill obligations set aside by their faith. It is the University's intent that students who must be absent from scheduled classes to fulfill religious obligations or observe practices associated with their faith not be disadvantaged. However, it is the student's responsibility to make arrangements with his/her instructors in advance. It is in the student's best interests to approach each instructor expeditiously and with sufficient notice that the rights and responsibilities of the instructor are not disrupted.

Students with disabilities should contact Ms. Beth Denhartigh at the beginning of the semester at 387-2116 or by email at beth.denhartigh@wmich.edu so that any physical, learning, vision, hearing, psychiatric or other disability can be documented and accommodations arranged. Please note that a disability determination must be made by Ms. Denhartigh's office before accommodations can be made.

Schedule of Reading and Writing Assignments

Please refer to the updates page at <http://www.retroflexive.com/3740updates> for news, reminders, announcements, and schedule changes. These things happen.

Week 1

Monday, May 04: Introduction to course: Linguistics and education.

- What's linguistics, and what does it have to do with teaching?
- What language is made of, how it works, and why any of this matters.

Wednesday, May 06: What every teacher needs to know about linguistics, part 1.

Come to class having read:

1. John R. Rickford, Foreword to *Code-Switching* (xi-xii).
2. "The Lay of the Land," ch. 1 in *Code-Switching* (pp. 3-27).

Discussion topics:

- Linguistic features and independent variables.
- Language? Variety? Dialect? Accent?
- Everyone speaks a dialect (even people from Michigan).

Week 2

Monday, May 11: What every teacher needs to know about linguistics, part 2.

Come to class having read "Language Variation in America," ch. 1 in *Dialects* (pp. 1-29).

Discussion topics:

- The construction of standardness.
- Language authority and language attitudes.

Wednesday, May 13: Language attitudes and language variation.

Quiz 1 (5% of course grade)

For class, read:

1. First half of "Exploring Dialects," ch. 2 in *Dialects* (30-48).
2. "Moving from Correction to Contrast," ch. 2 in *Code-Switching* (28-46).

Discussion topics:

- Stigmatized varieties.
- Real-life consequences of language attitudes, stigmatization, and perceptions about literacy.
- Begin work on language variation projects.**

Week 3

Monday, May 18: Language in the African American community, part 1.

For class, read:

1. Second half of "Exploring Dialects," chapter 2 in *Dialects* (49-62).
2. "Linguistic Insights for the Language Arts Classroom," ch. 3 in *Code-Switching* (47-54).
3. "Code-Switching Succeeds in Teaching Standard English," ch. 4 in *Code-Switching* (55-64).

Discussion topics:

- Linguistic features of African American English.
- AAE in the classroom.
- Code-switching and contrastive analysis.

Wednesday, May 20: Language in the African American community, part 2.

For class, read:

1. Rosina Lippi-Green, "The Real Trouble with Black English" (handout).
2. "Interpreting Language Differences," ch. 4 in *Dialects* (86-97).
3. "Oral Language Instruction," ch. 5 in *Dialects* (98-112).

Discussion topics:

- The Ann Arbor Black English case (1979) and Oakland School Board Resolution (1996-97).
- Using the vernacular to teach the standard.
- Work on language variation projects.

Week 4: Pragmatics: Language in context.

Monday, May 25: Memorial Day observed. No school!

Wednesday, May 27. Quiz 2 (5% of course grade). For class, read:

1. "Social Interaction," ch. 3 in *Dialects* (63-85).
2. "Diversity in Language," ch. 5 in *Code-Switching* (67-74).

Discussion topics:

- Beyond linguistic features: pragmatic norms and competence.
- Stylistic variation and linguistic repertoire.
- Culture, ritual, and communities of practice.
- Work on language variation projects.

Week 5: Complete and present language variation projects.

Monday, June 1. Class time for work on language variation projects.

Last day to withdraw from course (not that you'd want to).

Wednesday, June 3. Language variation projects due; presentations as scheduled.

Week 6: Turning theory into practice.

Monday, June 8. For class, read:

1. "Teaching Noun Patterns: Possessives," ch. 6 in *Code-Switching* (75-90).
2. "Teaching Noun Patterns: Plurals," ch. 7 in *Code-Switching* (91-101).
3. "Dialect and Writing," ch. 6 in *Dialects* (113-124).

Discussion topics:

- Grammatical variation in speech and writing.
- Trying your hand at contrastive analysis.
- Begin work on teaching practice projects.

Wednesday, June 10. Quiz 3 (5% of course grade). For class, read:

1. "Teaching Subject-Verb Agreement," ch. 8 in *Code-Switching* (102-120).
2. "Teaching Past Time," ch. 9 in *Code-Switching* (121-125).
3. "Teaching *Gonna/Going to*," ch. 10 in *Code-Switching* (126-131).

Discussion topics:

- Some historical context for prescriptive rules.
- Experimenting with contrastive analysis methods.
- Work on teaching practice projects.

Week 7: Turning theory into practice.

Monday, June 15. For class, read:

1. "Code-Switching with More Complex Patterns," ch. 11 in *Code-Switching* (132-142).
2. "Code-Switching in the Reading and Writing Classroom," ch. 12 in *Code-Switching* (142-153).
3. "Encountering New Patterns," ch. 13 in *Code-Switching* (154-157).

Discussion topics:

- Experimenting with contrastive analysis methods.
- Work on teaching practice projects.

Wednesday, June 17. For class, read:

1. "Dialect Awareness for Students," ch. 8 in *Dialects* (151-186).
2. "Conclusion," ch. 14 in *Code-Switching* (158-162).

Discussion topics:

- Teaching your students about language variation.
- Experimenting with contrastive analysis methods.
- Work on teaching practice projects.

Week 8: Complete and present teaching practice projects.

Monday, June 22. Quiz 4 (5% of course grade). Class time to work on projects.

Wednesday, June 24. Last meeting! Teaching practice projects due, with presentations as scheduled.