We recently received an email from a colleague who expressed dismay at the increasing disappearance of transitional English at four-year universities. The email said: "somewhere along the way basic writing became remedial, became punitive, became business as usual" (Susan N. Bernstein). The "business as usual" sentiment seems to be true at many institutions of higher education. For example, a Midwestern urban university recently published an academic plan for the twenty-first century which foregrounds academic preparedness for incoming students. The president's report card to the board of trustees lists elite entry as one of the university's achievements—citing an increase in enrolled National Merit Scholars. It also lists an increase in ACT scores of entering students as an achievement in academic excellence (UC21: The President's Report Card to the Board of Trustees).

The increased efforts of the university to "achieve academic excellence" and elite entry seem to have coupled with the passing of Ohio Senate Bill 311 which proposed phasing out all state-operated funding to development education at four-year universities. As a result, the combined effect has trickled down to the classroom level in the form of loss of access to the university for students who have traditionally been excluded (McNenny and Fitzgerald).

The "business as usual" sentiment, in which higher education acts in the interest of corporations and economic gains (Emery and Ohanian), and increases in the amount of standards work to exclude more students rather than provide access (Fox7), have unfortunately become the norm at many previously open-access institutions, with ACT and SAT scores providing convenient measures for deciding who enters and who is rejected.

Despite, and also because of, these obstacles, research that continues to counter deficiency assumptions about students and demonstrates the value of open admissions programs is indispensable. Owing to Mina Shaughnessy's legacy, we find her question still relevant: "What goes on and what ought to go on in the composition classroom?" (emphasis added) (CCQ320). What ought to go on is still quite relevant amid the changing face of what it means to be academically and technologically literate in today's world, in addition to the systemic qualities of old that continue to affect students in negative ways.

In this article, we use the term transitional English rather than remedial or developmental English in order to avoid the idea that these students are at-risk students. However, we also refer to what is known in academic circles as "remedial" or "developmental" education, as this term is still in widespread use.

In the composition classroom, we see a wide range of students who are in transitional English courses—often as a result of inferior school conditions (see Kozol), unequal funding (see Shor, "Errors and Economics"), and the miseducation (see Shor, "Errors and Economics") that they receive because of a zealous reliance on one-test scores. Statistics from a report on Remedial Education at Higher Education Institutions (Fall 2000) revealed that minorities are overrepresented in remedial courses: "At institutions with high minority enrollment, 43 percent of first-time freshmen were enrolled in remedial reading, writing, or mathematics, compared with 26 percent at institutions with low minority enrollment." As these discouraging statistics demonstrate, minority students' underprepared status often serves to compound their marginalization and oppression. A more progressive and democratic pedagogical approach to teaching academic literacy would be one in which students learn not only how to read and write academic texts, but also how to examine critically the discourse that makes up their world(s). Paulo Freire asserted that teachers and students could use literacy to examine the themes that emerge from texts and look critically at the "limitsituations"—the situations or myths that maintain the status quo and prevent them from fulfilling goals for their lives (99). One such limitsituation might be the inequality of school conditions that results in poor preparation in college students' English courses.
Fraser, and Marisa Castellano demonstrate in their study, through an analysis of students' development of academic literacy skills while learning to negotiate different discourses, that students may acquire critical literacy skills. This is evidenced by the fact that students who perform poorly in school were found to be deficient in critical literacy skills, which include social and cultural aspects.

In addition, all of the studies in the following section provide evidence that students can develop academic literacy skills while learning to critique dominant messages about themselves and their environment. Glynda Hull, Mike Rose, Kay Losey, and Ivanic, according to H. S. Alim, reported that few recent research studies in the United States employ a curriculum approach that addresses the issue of power, access, and equality that are embedded in language and literacy, and readers. Students would benefit from an awareness of how language functions to impose certain beliefs and values about society. The premise we are interested in is that students' work, can hold them back further from equality in school and society and that remediation, which comes from social constructed deficiencies, should not be deferred for later.

Therefore, students should not be perceived as being in need of basic skills but rather, it should focus on how students use reading and writing to make sense of the world. Teachers and students need to examine their work, the way that the language of the academy and how that impacts the perceived work, can hold them back further from equality in school and society. The premise we are interested in is that students' work, can hold them back further from equality in school and society. Therefore, reading and writing instruction should not be concerned only with teaching grammar and basic skills, but rather, it should focus on how students use reading and writing to make sense of the world. Teachers and students need to examine their work, the way that the language of the academy and how that impacts the perceived work, can hold them back further from equality in school and society.

Critical Language Awareness (CLA) is an area that students need to be concerned with. CLA is defined as awareness of the ways in which ideas become naturalized or taken for granted as "truths" about the natural and social world and how these ideas are reproduced in language and literacy. The purpose of CLA is to examine the ways in which students are positioned in the classroom discourse, both purposefully and inadvertently. Teachers in CLA classrooms are encouraged to ask critical questions about language, such as "Whose truths are being taken for granted as "truths" about the natural and social world and how these ideas are reproduced in language and literacy?" Critical Language Awareness (CLA) is an area that students need to be concerned with. CLA is defined as awareness of the ways in which ideas become naturalized or taken for granted as "truths" about the natural and social world and how these ideas are reproduced in language and literacy. The purpose of CLA is to examine the ways in which students are positioned in the classroom discourse, both purposefully and inadvertently. Teachers in CLA classrooms are encouraged to ask critical questions about language, such as "Whose truths are being taken for granted as "truths" about the natural and social world and how these ideas are reproduced in language and literacy?"
The culmination of this work came when the students chose to write a letter of protest to newspapers after a fellow classmate’s brother was killed by police.

The lesson at this point was that the students were in a transitional English course, and that basicskills were not sufficient. The significance of this study comes from Hull’s laboration with students to foster an awareness of how language is tied up with intellectual crippling. To this end, the job had a high turnover rate. Therefore, the problem of critical language awareness was one of getting students to understand the contradictions in their work and to write about them in an understandable English course. In part, the students were African American, Hispanic, and Asian, and 95% were women.

Similarly, Bernstein (“Teaching and Learning”) illustrates how developmental students were engaged in analysis of the problematic notion of high-stakes testing and its implications for his presence in a developmental course. Students evolved from being readers who read the texts exclusively from the perspective that the author has the ultimate authority and that they, as readers, must submit to that authority in order to comprehend and also be critical of the message. In this way, they became more effective and critical readers, a skill that allowed him the benefits of white privilege, because of his working-class background.

Bernstein’s study (“Writing and White Privilege”) asks students in a college course about accessing academic and professional language and being more effective and critical readers. The researchers encouraged the students to rely on the evidence of their own experiences, the experiences of others, and the dominant messages about the world. The students were able to “see,” that is, to analyze, the language and the critical ideas in texts. All of the students in the course were effective readers, as evidenced by their ability to identify and make sense of the evidence. They were able to construct a coherent understanding of the course, their reading, and the world around them. The researchers encouraged the students to use their own negative reactions to their spoken language on the printed page, such as “I don’t understand this,” “I don’t know what this means,” and so on. They were encouraged to use their own negative first reactions to their spoken language on the printed page, as if they were reading a newspaper article or a book, and to identify the language and the critical ideas in the text. They were also encouraged to think about the implications of the language and the critical ideas for themselves and for other students of color.

In this way, they became more effective and critical readers, a skill that allowed them the benefits of white privilege, because of their working-class background. Bernstein was able to cultivate academic literacy in a developmental class with the help of his students. They were able to “see,” that is, to analyze, the language and the critical ideas in texts. All of the students in the course were effective readers, as evidenced by their ability to identify and make sense of the evidence. They were able to construct a coherent understanding of the course, their reading, and the world around them. The researchers encouraged the students to use their own negative reactions to their spoken language on the printed page, as if they were reading a newspaper article or a book, and to identify the language and the critical ideas in the text. They were also encouraged to think about the implications of the language and the critical ideas for themselves and for other students of color.

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own voices within assignments that asked them to "teach," they were able to integrate their own voices into the academic discursive space. Students were encouraged to think critically and creatively about the language they used in their writing and speaking, and to reflect on how their language choices related to social and critical aspects of power and inequality.

In a qualitative study of underprepared college students, Lesley Lancaster and Rhiannon Taylor adopted a Critical Language Awareness (CLA) approach to teaching. In this approach, students were encouraged to explore their own voices and engage in social critique through literacy assignments that allowed them to connect with texts and through questions that were meaningful to them. The students were able to develop a better awareness of their language choices and how these choices were connected to texts and through questions that were meaningful to them. The students were also able to see the relevance of their own experiences to the dominant practices of reading articulated by teachers.

Implications for Using CLA as a Curricular Approach to Teaching

One of the key findings of this study is that students who were taught with a CLA approach were more likely to adopt critical perspectives on language and to see how these choices were connected to social and critical aspects of language. The students were also able to see the relevance of their own experiences to the dominant practices of reading articulated by teachers. This approach is particularly useful in teaching English to students in transition, as it empowers them to see the relevance of their own experiences to the dominant practices of reading and to connect with texts in meaningful ways.

Three main points can be drawn from this study:

1. The importance of students' own voices: Students were encouraged to reflect on their own experiences and to connect these to academic practices. This allowed them to see the relevance of their own voices to the dominant practices of reading and to develop a better awareness of their own language choices.

2. The role of critical thinking: Students were encouraged to think critically about the language they used in their writing and speaking. This allowed them to develop a better awareness of their own choices and how these choices were connected to social and critical aspects of power and inequality.

3. The need for interdisciplinary approaches: This approach is particularly useful when teaching English to students in transition, as it allows them to connect with texts and through questions that were meaningful to them. It also allows them to see the relevance of their own experiences to the dominant practices of reading articulated by teachers.
Critical Language Awareness and Learners in College Transitional English

Sanchez asked students to discuss in small groups the following questions:

1. Doyou see the word “manager” being used to position the students in a positive, neutral, or negative way? 
2. What idea is being imposed on the students? 
3. Can you think of any other words that might be used to position the students in a positive, neutral, or negative way?

In this chapter, Kozol describes a visit to an urban elementary school, from which he extracted “Preparing Minds for Markets” as a text for discussion. In this excerpt, he records how students reacted to the text:

"Preparing Minds for Markets“ was an article that I had heard students talk about. In this excerpt, the author discusses how teachers used the word “manager” to encourage students to think about themselves as managers. Students were asked to consider how the word “manager” changed the way they thought about their futures. Catherine Wallace asserts that “one advantage of CLA as a sense-making activity is that it provides students with opportunities to engage in critical thinking work and to speak back to texts and language practices that position them in negative ways.”

Sanchez observed that in this class, students were actually able to engage in encounters with the text, which allowed them to reflect on their own experiences and the experiences of others. She notes that the students were able to critically analyze the text and question the assumptions or “common-sense knowledge” about the world that is tied to language practices. One CLA activity that she implemented centered on an excerpt from Alex’s essay, which demonstrated a growing CLA that resulted from Shaughnessy’s legacy, namely, the value of open-admissions programs. Despite current detractors, educators argue that students and classes need to engage in discussions about the socially constructed nature of language and the power of language practices. The experiences of students should be validated and used to engage them in more critical awareness of how language practices are tied to unequal relations of power. The experiences of students should be validated and used to engage them in more critical awareness of how language practices are tied to unequal relations of power.
This page discusses the importance of critical language awareness in education. It argues that educators must critically examine the language practices that may sometimes position students negatively. The document references various works, including those by Alim, Armstrong, Bernstein, Clark, Coles, D'Souza, Emery, Fairclough, Fox, Freire, Gee, Hicks, Hull, Kozol, Lancaster, Lesley, Luke, McNenny, Meier, Morrell, Ohio Senate, Remedi, Shaughnessy, and Rose. These works explore topics such as critical literacy, race, and social justice in education. The document also references legal and legislative documents, such as Ohio Senate Bill Number 311.
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  - A tentative title and ISBN number
  - A proposed publication date and budget

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