Race, Language, and the Achievement Gap in America

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Agenda
Race, Language, and the Achievement Gap in America

◆ Why Academic English Matters
◆ Language and Communication Strategies for Teens
◆ Leap’s – “Great Eight”
◆ Tutor /Afterschool Leader Activities
Presenter Background

- Executive Director, Leap Learning Systems
- Morehouse College, Roosevelt University, Universite Libre de Bruxelles
- Human resources professional with 20 years of experience in the corporate and not-for-profit arenas
  - Pepsi Cola Company, CNA UniSource, Service America Corporation, Compass Group, AutoNation, Inc, Discovery Channel, Target and hundreds of small businesses
- Youth development work throughout professional life
  - Boys & Girls Club; Chicago Youth Centers; Little League Baseball; Junior Achievement; Daniel Murphy Scholarship Fund; NFTE; YMCA; Afterschool Matters; Detroit Public Schools, D.C. and Maryland Public Schools; Chicago Public Schools and dozens of others.
About Leap Learning Systems

- Founded in 1988 by Catherine H. Gottfred, Ph.D. to help individuals increase their **speech**, **language**, **literacy**, and **communication** skills.

- Our staff is comprised of speech/language pathologists and seasoned educators.

- We develop and deliver professional development programming for teachers, educators and students that enhance literacy, oral communication and vocabulary in the classroom (**learning environment**).

- Our programs are proven to accelerate academic and social success while creating self-confidence and fulfillment in children, parents and teachers.

- We work with grades Pre-K – 12 and beyond.
Leap Learning Systems - Beliefs/Principles

◆ Respect all social dialects.
◆ Promote the idea that use of appropriate language can enable home, school and work success.
◆ Understanding of the rules and differences among American dialects so that we can most effectively promote the use of Academic/Business English.
◆ We strive to teach the importance of being able to use Academic English as a tool – for life.
  ■ effective listening and speaking skills provide students a base to successfully process and retain classroom content.

The motivation is not to change the students, just give them guidance and training on ways they communicate in social, academic, and business environments.
Words are Tools

- To Think
- To Talk
- To Read
- To Future
- To Problem Solve
- To Understand
- To Imagine
- To Get Along With Others
Why is language important?
The readiness gap of high needs children

Number of words heard
By age 5, the child of a parent who is language focused has heard 50,000,000 words spoken as opposed to the child of a parent who is not language focused. That child has only heard 10,000,000 words (Hart and Risley, 1995).
The readiness gap of high needs children

- **Listening to language is not always a positive experience**
  Children from low language resource backgrounds hear 75% fewer encouragements than high language resource background children do. (Hart and Risley, 1995)

- **Time spent with reading experiences**
  Prior to kindergarten a child from a low reading resource background averages a total of 25 home hours spent in reading experiences as opposed to high language resource background children who average 1,000 home hours. (Whitehurst, 1997)
Language and Poverty in America

- Language is the basis of literacy.

- Children in poverty often have had fewer words spoken to them, with shorter utterances, and greater numbers of discouragements.

- May not have had the opportunity to learn the school language of negotiation, self advocacy, and prediction.

- May not have had the language underpinnings of math and science.
Why Academic English Matters

**Academic English**: For our purposes we define Academic English as the effective use of listening and speaking skills in a school setting.

According to Joos (1967), every language in the world has five registers: frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate.

Teacher instruction, standardized tests, and job interviewers use the formal register.

Not all students are exposed to the formal register at home (Payne, 1996), but all students can benefit from direct instruction about its parameters.

Using Academic English within the classroom setting allows students to more successfully process and retain classroom content.

Read:

What happens when you don’t have rich/full language experiences?
Words are Tools

To Think

To Talk

To Read

To Future

To Problem Solve

To Get Along With Others

To Understand

To Imagine

Words are Tools
Why are There Dialects?

• Social isolation still exists in the 21st century.
  • Immigrant groups often still settle in their own urban neighborhoods and live and work apart from other groups.
  • Not separated from the mainstream by mountains, they are effectively cut off in many ways from it socially.

• Many large cities like Chicago have distinct ethnic neighborhoods:
  • Italian, Mexican, Chinese, Korean, German, Irish, Jewish, Nigerian or Polish.
Why are There Dialects?

- Historically, something similar happened with **African American English (AAE)**: Even after emancipation, many African Americans were socially isolated, and thus African American English has developed as a distinct dialect.

- A comparable process has given rise to **Chicano English**, a dialect of English spoken by some people of Hispanic descent.

- Speaking a certain dialect can be a means of identifying with a region or a way of life; the speech patterns of groups or individuals are an important part of their identity.
What is Style?

• On an individual level, choosing to retain or to modify a dialect acquired in childhood is part of the way one presents oneself. **Part of your personal style.**

• Style can be thought of as a collection of features that suggest to others who we are and how we want to be perceived by others,
  • what type of house we live in or car we drive,
  • what we eat and drink, health behaviors
  • what we read,
  • how we speak.

• Speech can reveal a great deal.
  • Through the words we use, the way we pronounce them, and how we arrange our words in sentences.

• For instance – If I said “Oh my gosh, it’s like really hot in here” or “Howdy partner, settle down on that bench over there for a while and rest” what would you think about my hometown, ethnicity, gender, or age?
Style is Learned

• Speaking in a certain way—or ways—is a learned ability. Some aspects of speech style is tied to geography—where speakers grew up. But does not totally determine speech style.
  • Biology does not completely determine speech characteristics.
    ✓ Vocal pitch is partly learned: boys learn that lower-pitched voices are associated with masculinity, girls learn how to sound more feminine.
  • Nor do race and ethnicity cause a person to speak a certain way.
    ✓ babies born in Asia and raised in the U.S. by middle-class English-speaking parents in a mainstream community will speak mainstream English (and will encounter the same stylistic choices as other mainstream speakers).
• Finally, people in different jobs—newscasters, radio DJs, plumbers, physicists, doctors or CEOs—learn specialized ways of talking.
Speakers Shift Their Styles

◆ No one speaks the same way all the time. Speakers adjust constantly to the audience, situation, and topic.
◆ People who speak more than one language choose the one that seems more appropriate at any particular moment (*speech and language professionals call this code-switching*).
◆ People who speak more than one dialect of a language also shift between them—
  ■ for instance, using African American English on some occasions and Standard English on others, and shifting within an occasion to signal meaning subtly.
◆ Using the dialect of a group indicates affiliation with the group.
  ■ For example, suburban White teenagers who identify with African American culture or music may incorporate features of African American English into their speech—what *speech and language professionals call dialect crossing*.
Stylistic Choices Have Consequences

- People learn in childhood, in their families and peer groups, the sounds, grammar, and vocabulary associated with their language variety.
- At the same time, they learn how to use language:
  - how fast to talk, how loud, whether and when to talk at the same time as others, what rhythm to use, how often to tell personal stories and how to structure them. (i.e. you know what you can and cannot say to your Grandparents, School Principles or Pastor)
- When speakers share expectations about these sorts of things, their conversations proceed smoothly; even if they disagree, they are likely to understand each other. When conversationalists have different styles, however, misunderstanding may ensue.
- Adopting a style can have benefits, such as
  - closer rapport with a group and
  - presentation of self in a desired light, and
  - research demonstrates that during interaction, speakers who are feeling positive about each other tend to converge their speaking styles.
Stylistic Choices Have Consequences

• But there can also be negative consequences to not sounding as expected.
  – If a male is thought to sound feminine, he may be subjected to ridicule.
  – Someone of African American ethnicity who does not use African American English (AAE) could face disapproval from those who do, while other people may find it strange to hear an African American person speaking in a way they associate with European Americans.
  – A White teenager’s use of AAE features may evoke negative responses from peers or teachers.
  – And people may think twice before accepting the professional services of someone with a strong regional accent different from their own.
No topic in sociolinguistics has been studied more than the history and the structure of *African American English* (AAE). Also referred to as African American Vernacular English (AAVE), Black English, and Ebonics.

Over the past 50 years, linguists have conducted a great deal of scientific research on AAE, but the public has not been well informed about what language features characterize this dialect and where it came from.

AAE and AAVE must be distinguished from Hip-Hop, popularly used by young people.
Key Ideas: African American English (AAE)

◆ AAE has a grammatical system that is as systematic as that of Mainstream (Standard) American English. It is not a substandard, uneducated, or lazy way of speaking.

◆ There is debate about some aspects of the history of AAE, but researchers agree that its roots are as deep as those of other social and regional varieties of American English.

◆ Despite this history and linguistic standing, there are often negative social consequences to speaking AAE. Speakers of AAE face discrimination because of persistent false stereotypes, for instance about the relation between academic ability and ways of speaking.
Get all the right skills in your toolbox

Problem Solving

Communication and Collaboration

Content Knowledge

Critical Thinking

English and mathematics

Teamwork

Reading & writing communications
Language for Scholars
Student Testimony

“I participated in LFS right before entering high school, and I can honestly say that the skills and confidence that I gained from participating are what laid the foundation for me to become the leader that I am today.”

“I am thankful that an organization like Leap exist and works to improve and encourage the success of young people. I learned quite a bit and most importantly I was entertained and interested.
Why Language for Scholars?

◆ The LFS communication program maintains respect for home and cultural speaking patterns at all times.
◆ Participants work in an intensive program developed by speech-language pathologists to address active listening, pragmatics and speech production skills in a variety of realistic situations.
◆ The program goes beyond focusing on ‘public speaking’ skills to utilize the knowledge base of speech-language pathologists regarding speech and language production systems, sociolinguistics, and metalinguistics.
◆ Participants learn the value of each style of communication, and when and how to use each style.
## The “Great Eight”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPEECH GOAL AREA</th>
<th>GOALS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Articulation</td>
<td>To emphasize all sounds and syllables in words.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Body Language</td>
<td>To project appropriate body language to support oral language.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Tone</td>
<td>To make speech sound interesting, meaningful, and convincing. (a vocal gesture)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Projection</td>
<td>To speak loud enough to be heard</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Rate</td>
<td>To pace your speech.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Filler Free Speech</td>
<td>To not use “garbage” or low utility words in your speech.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Conversational Rules</td>
<td>To use language to get what you want.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Grammar</td>
<td>To use Academic English</td>
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# The “Great Eight”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speech Goal Area</th>
<th>Student Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Articulation</td>
<td>People understand what I am saying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Body Language</td>
<td>I am ready to communicate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Intonation</td>
<td>My message is easy to listen to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Projection</td>
<td>I can speak in a variety of settings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Rate</td>
<td>My message is easy to follow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Filler Free Speech</td>
<td>My message will not contain a lot of “garbage” or low utility words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Conversation Rules</td>
<td>I have the skills to meet you half way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Grammar</td>
<td>I sound like I have command of the subject.</td>
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Move students through stages:

1. Confident
2. Competent
3. Highly Effective
## Speech Goal Evaluation

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<th>5</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Articulation</strong></td>
<td>Underproduction made speech very difficult to understand.</td>
<td>Underproduction made some words difficult to understand.</td>
<td>Few errors in final sounds and multi-syllabic words</td>
<td>Complete clarity produced all syllables and final sounds</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dropped final sounds and syllables</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Body Language</strong></td>
<td>Significantly detracted from the message.</td>
<td>Message was somewhat less believable.</td>
<td>Speaker showed confidence and eye contact inconsistently</td>
<td>Body Language always conveyed the message.</td>
<td>Speaker used gestures, strong stance, and eye contact to display confidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speaker did not display eye contact nor confidence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tone</strong></td>
<td>Little if any variability in tone of voice.</td>
<td>Some use of tone to convey meaning.</td>
<td>Highlights one or two words with voice.</td>
<td>Excellent use of tone to convey message.</td>
<td>Highlights at least one word per sentence.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does not use voice to highlight words</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Projection/Volume</strong></td>
<td>Projection was not used during any of the task to fit speaking situation</td>
<td>Adequate projection for up to 60% of the task</td>
<td></td>
<td>Adequate projection for 80% or more of the task</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fluency/Rate</strong></td>
<td>Rate (rapid, intermittent or slow) significantly detracts from message. Filler words inhibit message</td>
<td>Rate (rapid, intermittent or slow) requires listener’s attention. Uses filler words occasionally</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rate (rapid, intermittent or slow) always supports the message. Uses no filler words</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conversation rules</strong></td>
<td>Topic shifts, narrative difficulty, reformulations, ignoring listener needs significantly interferes with message</td>
<td>Topic shifts, narrative difficulty, reformulations, ignoring listener needs require listener’s focus</td>
<td></td>
<td>Topic shifts, narrative difficulty, reformulations, ignoring listener needs never interfere with the message</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Semantics/Grammar</strong></td>
<td>Nondialectal grammar and semantic issues significantly interfere with the speaker’s message</td>
<td>Nondialectal grammar and semantic issues occasionally interfere with the speaker’s message</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nondialectal grammar and semantic issues seldom occur</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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LFS Partners

- By the Hand Club for Kids
- Chicago Public Schools
- Chicago State University – Trio Talent Search/Upward Bound, Male Resource Ctr.
- Chicago Youth Centers
- Chicago International Charter School – Bucktown, Ralph Ellison, Longwood, Northtown
- City Colleges of Chicago – KKC
- Daniel Murphy Scholarship Fund
- The Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship
- Visitation Scholarship Program
- University of Chicago: Collegiate Scholars Program
- Youth Crossroads
- METROsquash
- I Have A Dream Foundation
- LINK Unlimited
- Apostolic Church of God – Girls Scouts
Speech Goal – What is Full articulation?

• Move your tongue, lips, and jaw so that each sound in a word is clearly produced.
• Make sure that consonants at the end of words are clear.
• If there are two or more syllables in a word – let’s hear them!

Huh???

I’m getting everything you say!
Working on Full Articulation

• General Approaches
  o Begin by emphasizing sound precision at the beginning of words – p,b,t,d,k,g,ch,sh sounds are particularly useful
  o Move on to sounds at the end of words
  o At the start, overdo your effort – emphasize movement of the tongue, lips, and jaw
  o Then reduce your loudness, but make sounds precisely – see how your voice carries

• Activities:
  o “Count to 10”
  o “I Pledge Allegiance to the Flag”
  o “Across a Crowded Room”
  o “Plurals, Possessives and I Did It!”

• Cues you can use:
  o “Move your tongue, lips – at the end”
  o “Let’s hear the [t] etc. sound!”
  o Play on words

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Questions?

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Thank you