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## TEACHING LINGUISTICS

### Attracting Black students to linguistics through a Black-centered Introduction to Linguistics course

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In response to the lack of culturally sustaining pedagogies for Black students in linguistics, we created an online Introduction to Linguistics course designed as part of a specially funded research program that serves Black undergraduates from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) as well as Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). In recognition of the fact that conventional introductory linguistics courses often alienate Black students, the course was designed to center Black language and culture in every lesson. We describe the rationale for and implementation of the course, as well as the impact of the model on students and instructors. The course's Black-centered content as well as its online synchronous and asynchronous teaching model can be adapted for other teaching contexts as a way to recruit Black students into linguistics and to offer linguistics courses to students at universities, especially HBCUs, that do not have linguistics programs. The work is particularly relevant as linguists seek to be inclusive in their teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic and work toward the greater inclusion of Black people in every aspect of linguistics due to the heightened awareness of anti-Blackness in higher education and specifically in language studies.\*

*Keywords:* introductory linguistics, culturally sustaining pedagogy, inclusive education, African American language and culture, online teaching

**1. INTRODUCTION: THE NEED TO RECRUIT BLACK STUDENTS TO LINGUISTICS.** Despite the fact that a considerable amount of linguistic research has focused on Black English, making it the most-studied variety of American English (Green 2004), linguistics faces a persistent inclusion problem.<sup>1</sup> According to the Linguistic Society of America's 2019 annual report on linguistics in higher education, '[t]he population of ethnic minorities with advanced degrees in linguistics is so low in the U.S. that few federal agencies report data for these groups' (Linguistic Society of America 2020:28). As Rickford (1997)

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<sup>1</sup> We use the term *Black English* throughout this article to refer to the language variety typically labeled *African American English* or *African American Language*. We use *Black* as an umbrella term for the language variety and as an ethnoracial label in order to include people of African descent in the US who do not identify as African American (e.g. people who identify primarily as Caribbean or African) but identify as part of the Black diaspora and use features of the variety.

points out, it is a systemic injustice within linguistics that our discipline has greatly benefited from the examination of the languages and cultures of populations that are under-represented within the field. Moreover, given linguists' increasing recognition of the need for language users themselves to take the lead in linguistic analysis and policies within their respective linguistic, cultural, or heritage groups for both scholarly and ethical reasons (see e.g. the Linguistic Society of America's Natives4Linguistics special interest group), it is vital to the development of linguistic science to recruit more speakers of Black English into the discipline.

To the extent that linguistics departments and programs are successful in attracting Black students, this is primarily due to courses on Black language and culture, creole and pidgin languages, language and race, and language and power. Often these courses are taught by Black linguists and explicitly and extensively address issues of particular interest and relevance to Black students (such courses include those taught by John Rickford at Stanford University, Lisa Green at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and Anne Charity Hudley at the University of California, Santa Barbara). In addition to representing Black students and their experiences in the curriculum, these courses teach concepts and phenomena that are directly applicable to their lives within and outside of the classroom. For example, a discussion of racist discourses may include the history of these discourses, how they are perpetuated by dominant institutions (including academia), and strategies for challenging or undermining them.

At many colleges and universities, however, such courses are not the first entrée into the study of linguistics. If a conventional introductory linguistics course is a Black student's first encounter with the field, then it is very possible that their first impression is that linguistics is a field in which their experiences are not relevant and one that would not provide them with valuable skills and knowledge for everyday life or for a career in their area of interest. Whereas introductory courses typically highlight the analysis of the 'building blocks' of language structure and the linguistic terminology to describe them—topics that are not immediately relevant to students majoring in, for example, chemistry—language and culture courses teach skills of linguistic analysis in conjunction with social and/or critical analysis that frames language as a social practice with consequences in all aspects of people's lives (e.g. how the language used to share scientific findings in chemistry with the general public affects understanding of the content).

Introductory linguistics courses, which are often prerequisites for more advanced linguistics coursework, can be gatekeepers for Black students in particular. While content may draw from languages from around the globe, it often does not include lived experiences or examples from Black language and life in the US except in brief units on African American English; additionally, Black students may not see clear pathways to linguistics-related careers either in or outside of academia. Making introductory linguistics courses more relevant to Black students also makes these courses relevant to all students, because doing so forefronts issues of representation within the curriculum, moves away from teaching linguistics for linguistics' sake, and requires instructors to explicitly convey why students should study this field. Introductory linguistics courses should show students from the beginning of their academic careers that their languages and cultures are relevant to the discipline. Considering the significance of Black language to linguistics in the US and worldwide, Black students deserve to receive this message directly and explicitly. The Black Lives Matter movement and awareness campaigns during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic—particularly #BlackInTheIvory—have laid bare the need for greater inclusion of Black scholars in linguistics, and that goal starts with a greater commitment to inclusion at the introductory level.

**2. RETHINKING INTRODUCTORY LINGUISTICS COURSES.** In traditional introductory courses and texts, sociolinguistic variation and applied linguistics are presented toward the end, if at all—typically after phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, historical linguistics, and language acquisition (see e.g. Denham & Lobeck 2013, Department of Linguistics at the Ohio State University 2016, Finegan 2015, Fromkin, Rodman, & Hyams 2017, Genetti 2018, O’Grady et al. 2017). This ordering, as well as the emphasis on the structure of the world’s languages, targets students who are already likely to be drawn to linguistics as a major. It also reifies the separation of ‘formal’ or ‘theoretical’ and ‘socio’ linguistics and the perception of sociolinguistic topics as secondary to supposedly ‘core’ subfields. This bias is particularly consequential for Black and other underrepresented students who are interested in sociolinguistic topics: they may drop the course before they have the opportunity to learn about these topics, and even students who complete the course may feel that they have limited options for what they can do within linguistics or with the knowledge that they gain.

Even in socially oriented functionalist linguistics departments, such as ours at the University of California, Santa Barbara, the sociocultural contexts of language are often deemphasized in the introductory course. In order to make linguistic concepts accessible and to provide examples from a range of languages, simplified data sets are used as examples in lectures and assessments, and, as a result, culturally based dimensions of a language are often lost. In contrast, general education courses in sociocultural linguistics, which are designed to be accessible to majors and nonmajors alike, center around the relationship of language to culture, societal structures, and identity. The department has eleven major degrees (Linguistics; Language, Culture, and Society; Linguistics with a Language and Speech Technologies emphasis; Linguistics with a Speech-Language Sciences and Disorders emphasis; and Linguistics with one of seven language emphases) and five minor degrees (Linguistics; Sociocultural Linguistics; Language and Speech Technologies; Speech-Language Sciences and Disorders; Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). All of them require or allow students to take sociocultural courses such as Language and Power; Language in Society; Language, Gender, and Sexuality; Language, Race, and Ethnicity; and Language, Power, and Learning. Students who have taken one or more of these types of courses can bring knowledge about this relationship into their introductory linguistics course. However, it should not be students’ sole responsibility to make such connections. Diverse and inclusive introductory courses are key to creating a diverse and inclusive discipline, and all students who take an introductory linguistics course as their first linguistics course should come away with basic knowledge both of language structure and of how language is influenced by and influences the social and cultural world.

Some models for introductory courses and texts aiming to address these issues are structured with underrepresented students and nonmajors in mind. These models generally emphasize application, introduce variation and sociolinguistic realities early, minimize linguistic jargon, and/or emphasize English for conceptual clarity. For example, Peter Jenks, Associate Professor of Linguistics at the University of California, Berkeley, collaborated with Charity Hudley to redesign the department’s introductory linguistics course to utilize this model. Jenks now teaches sociolinguistics in the middle rather than at the end of the course and includes explicit discussion and comparison of various English dialects; Black language is a central part of this unit ‘because students are [already] familiar with [Black English and] doing this both normalizes dialectal variation and allows students to challenge some of their preconceptions about correctness’ (Jenks, p.c.). Spring et al. (2000) describe various introductory course models implemented at their respective institutions; these include models that emphasize students’ lived so-

ciolinguistic experiences, focus on linguistic applications in other disciplines, and/or prioritize relevant linguistic content over cursory exposure to every linguistic subfield. Behrens and Parker's (2010) textbook 'approaches linguistics by examining how the various branches of the discipline are put to use in the real world' and 'aims to reach ... students studying the discipline of linguistics and those in related fields that are informed by language issues' (2010:1, 2). Hazen (2015) introduces the concepts of variation, standards, and vernaculars in the first chapter and frames the text as an introduction to language rather than linguistics.<sup>2</sup>

While some introductory courses and texts are designed for nonmajors generally, others are created for nonmajors from specific disciplines. For example, Amberg and Vause (2009) designed their text specifically to help nonlinguistics majors in literature, professional writing, and education 'make connections between content and their lives' (Reaser, Langkamp, & Odom 2011:104). Future educators are a crucial demographic of nonmajors: linguistic diversity will be part of their everyday professional lives, but it is not always an integral topic in their preparation to become assessors of writing skills, reading comprehension, and content knowledge. Sociolinguists have written at length on the need for linguistically informed teachers and pedagogy for social and educational equity (e.g. Brown 2008, Curzan 2013, DeGraff & Stump 2018, Mallinson & Charity Hudley 2018, Reaser 2016). These models have great potential to attract and retain Black students.

A focus on Black English is essential to any effort to include Black students in linguistics. This focus, however, should not be relegated to a sociolinguistics unit in which Black English is examined primarily for its structural differences from standardized English in ways that make Black students feel targeted and marginalized (Walters 1996). Rather, the structure of Black English should be a topic of analysis throughout the course, alongside other languages around the world. Most linguistics courses emphasize non-Indo-European and smaller languages that few students in the class have any familiarity with (Dawson 2016). While it is important to expose students to less familiar linguistic structures, introductory linguistics courses are also an opportunity to meet students where they are academically, intellectually, and socially. For Black students, these courses offer opportunities to learn that their language has been studied (i.e. recognized by linguists as being worthy of study), that analytic skills in linguistics can shed light on phenomena studied in other disciplines, and that users of diverse languages and varieties (i.e. people from diverse cultures and backgrounds) are integral to linguistic advancement because they bring new perspectives and insights to the predominantly white field. Learning that Black English is a recognized linguistic variety lays the groundwork for Black students to bring their own language practices into the milieu of later courses, whether in class discussions or in assignments and papers. Likewise, Black English can and should be included in courses that are not introductory-level or sociolinguistic in nature—for example, as a data set in an upper-level phonology, morphology, syntax, or historical linguistics course.

**3. SUPPORTING BLACK LINGUISTICS STUDENTS.** Although all linguistics students take courses in linguistic structure, not all students do so because they enjoy detailed structural analysis; rather, they recognize that the cumulative knowledge they gain as a major or minor in linguistics contributes to their broader academic, career, or other personal goals, as well as making them more informed citizens of the world. Nonlinguistic

<sup>2</sup> For additional examples of introductory course structure and materials, see the Linguistic Society of America's Pedagogical Materials webpage: <https://www.linguisticsociety.org/e-learning/materials>.

majors and minors may take an introductory linguistics course for the same reasons. Considering that linguistics is a ‘discovery’ major at many colleges and universities—that is, most students do not know about the field before enrolling and therefore most students in the major have switched from a different major (cf. Cole, Cole, & Ferguson 2006)—and that most linguistics departments have relatively small numbers of majors, it is important that introductory courses be designed to accommodate students with no prior exposure to linguistics and to attract them to learning more about the discipline, whether in the form of taking more classes, majoring or minoring, or independent learning. At the very least, every student should leave the introductory course with an understanding of how linguistic knowledge is applicable to their academic major(s), personal interests, and cultural background and identities.

Black undergraduate students are underrepresented in linguistics but are concentrated in disciplines with language-related issues, particularly law and public policy, psychology, social work, business, sociology, communication, and education (Carnevale et al. 2016)—majors that many Black students choose because they lead to careers in which they can work to uplift Black communities (Beasley 2011). In addition to increasing the diversity of students and academic interests represented in linguistics classrooms, explicitly acknowledging and fostering ties between linguistics and other disciplines will also make linguistics more central to these disciplines and to the experiences of students who major in them. Some nonlinguistics majors (e.g. education, communication sciences and disorders) already require or allow linguistics coursework, but this varies by institution.

Some of the challenges that Black students face in linguistics courses are specific to the discipline; however, Black students in the US confront structural barriers in higher education regardless of their area of study. Therefore, problems within linguistics also reflect institutional inequalities within education, and models of introductory linguistics courses that aim to attract and retain Black students, from any discipline, should build on existing successful models for educating Black undergraduate students. Some of these models overlap with or are subsumed under models for teaching students of color or underrepresented students more broadly, while others are for Black students specifically. Black students’ academic achievement is influenced greatly by factors such as the demographic profile of their institution—for example, a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) versus a Predominantly White Institution (PWI)—their level of academic integration and access to faculty mentoring, their level of social integration and access to cultural resources, their sense of self both as an individual and as a student, familial support, and financial resources (Bonner 2010, Strayhorn 2010a,b). Educational researchers have demonstrated the positive effect of highly supportive, community- or family-like educational environments on Black students’ academic achievement (e.g. Strayhorn 2008). This approach is most common at HBCUs, where faculty regularly and openly display concern for students’ educational and personal welfare, and the university’s social and academic structures center on Black students’ lived experiences in a way that creates a sense of belonging at the institutional level (Palmer & Young 2010). Learning from a faculty member from the same ethnoracial background has been shown to benefit college-level students of color, as has learning culturally relevant curricula that reflect students’ personal experiences, validate experiential and heritage knowledge, address social issues relevant to students’ communities, and do not require students of color to assimilate to white educational models or cultural norms (e.g. King et al. 2019, Paris & Alim 2015, Quaye, Griffin, & Museus 2015).

For undergraduates in any discipline, instructors of lower-division courses are crucial because they make ‘[t]hat connection between introductory courses and what comes

next'; moreover, '[t]o a student who has never encountered a discipline before, the professor teaching the introductory course is the discipline' (Supiano 2018, paragraphs 20–21). Research has shown that senior faculty instruction of lower-division courses improves students' overall success and increases their interest in majoring in the discipline (Supiano 2018). Combined with the demonstrated benefits of same-race instructors and culturally relevant curricula for students of color, this means that an introductory linguistics course designed to attract Black students would ideally be taught by senior Black linguistics faculty and have Black language and culture as core parts of the curriculum. Considering the limited number of Black and especially Black senior faculty within linguistics, this is not currently possible for most departments; hiring Black faculty should therefore be a top priority. However, making the structure and/or content of the introductory course more relevant to Black students is something that any instructor can and should do.

It is important to note that when teaching about Black English, the instructor's ethno-racial background relative to their students' makes a difference in complex ways—especially given that most linguistics students and faculty are white. Summarizing findings from her survey of university instructors who teach Black English, Weldon (2012) notes that Black instructors have an 'insider' status that may legitimize the course for Black students, and as instructors they can share lived experiences relevant to the course that may resonate with Black students. White instructors' 'outsider' status means they lack native-speaker intuition and firsthand experience with the cultural points of discussion, and Black students often do not respond well to having their own language, culture, and experiences explained to them by a non-Black instructor because of the objectification of the material and the lack of lived experience as context. Weldon (2012:236) also notes, however, that some Black respondents 'said that students do not seem to respect the information [from Black instructors] as much as they might if it were coming from a white instructor'. Our approach recognizes these issues by utilizing a team-teaching model. This allows students both to interact with senior faculty and to have Black faculty and graduate student instructors and teaching assistants. Although the course we describe below was specifically designed for a special research program, the general model can be adapted to other classroom contexts.

**4. THE UCSB-HBCU SCHOLARS IN LINGUISTICS PROGRAM.** Faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates in the UCSB Department of Linguistics study the ways that languages and language varieties around the world are used in everyday life. As functionalists, UCSB linguists look to social interaction, social and cultural change over time, and cognitive and biological processes to understand why languages work the way they do, making explicit connections between linguistic structure and language use. The department has a special focus on the languages of Indigenous communities as well as the use of language by other groups that are denied power within the larger society. Many members of the department therefore have a strong commitment to using linguistics to advance social justice as well as scientific knowledge. The department has special strengths in sociocultural linguistics, including a separate undergraduate major in Language, Culture, and Society, which has been very successful in attracting UCSB students from underrepresented groups to the discipline. The department also offers three courses in African American English: a lower-division general education course for nonmajors, an upper-division course on linguistic structure for majors, and a graduate-level course. Importantly, UCSB is the highest-ranked and highest-resourced Minority Serving Institution in the United States, a federal designation that was granted only in 2015 (Gordon 2015). The Department of Linguistics takes the new designation



seriously and seeks to learn from its HBCU partners what it truly means to be a minority-serving institution (Logan 2019).

The Black Studies-oriented introductory course we describe below was created as part of the UCSB-HBCU Scholars in Linguistics Program, which began in 2017–18 and is jointly funded by the National Science Foundation’s Research Experiences for Undergraduates Program and the University of California’s UC-HBCU Initiative.<sup>3</sup> The project seeks to establish a pathway for Black students from HBCUs and other institutions to enroll in graduate programs in linguistics and related fields. The long-term goal of the project is to establish a sustainable model for cross-campus collaborations that broadens Black students’ participation in linguistics and also increases the number of linguistically informed Black scholars in fields such as communication, speech and hearing sciences, and education. Part of the challenge of meeting this goal is that many of the colleges and universities that serve Black students do not offer undergraduate majors in linguistics; in fact, linguistics is not offered as a major at any HBCU. For this reason, students in the UCSB-HBCU Scholars in Linguistics Program complete an on-line introductory linguistics course through UCSB during the winter quarter prior to their summer research program. Undergraduate scholars from HBCUs, UCSB, and other colleges and universities are recruited in the fall of each academic year. This article focuses on the first two years of the program.

**5. TEACHING INTRODUCTORY LINGUISTICS FOR A BLACK STUDENT AUDIENCE.** Tables 1 and 2 summarize the structure of the course and the roles and backgrounds of individuals who participated in each of the two years. We discuss this information in more detail in the following section.

	YEAR 1 (2018)	YEAR 2 (2019)
INSTRUCTORS	One graduate Instructor of Record (Calhoun) Two faculty Teaching Assistants (Bucholtz, Charity Hudley)	One graduate Instructor of Record (Calhoun) One graduate Teaching Assistant (Exford)
PEER MENTOR	One peer mentor (Johnson)	No peer mentor
COURSE LENGTH	10 weeks (9 weeks of instruction)	11 weeks (10 weeks of instruction)
INSTRUCTION FORMAT	Two synchronous lectures per week via Zoom <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 75 minutes each</li> <li>• All students, instructors, and the peer mentor attended</li> </ul> One synchronous discussion and review section per week via Zoom <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One hour</li> <li>• All students attended the same section</li> <li>• Each instructor and the peer mentor held two hours of synchronous online office hours per week</li> </ul>	Two asynchronous video lectures per week <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 45–75 minutes each</li> <li>• Accompanying lecture guide for each</li> </ul> One synchronous discussion and review section per week via Zoom <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One hour</li> <li>• Each student assigned to one of three sections offered each week</li> <li>• Each instructor held two hours of synchronous online office hours per week</li> </ul>
PRIMARY TEXTS	<i>How languages work: An introduction to language and linguistics</i> , 2nd edition (Genetti 2018) <i>African American English: A linguistic introduction</i> (Green 2002)	

(TABLE 1. *Continues*)

<sup>3</sup> Additional information about the UCSB program, UC-HBCU Initiative, and NSF award can be found at <https://ucsbhbculing.com/>.

	YEAR 1 (2018)	YEAR 2 (2019)
TOPICS COVERED (IN ORDER)	Introduction to linguistics Discourse, pragmatics, and embodiment Lexicon and morphology Syntax Phonetics Phonology Language variation and ideologies Language change and contact	Introduction to linguistics Discourse, pragmatics, and embodiment Lexicon and morphology Morphology and syntax Syntax Phonetics Phonology Language variation and ideologies
# OF STUDENTS & TIME ZONES	10 students 2 time zones	8 students 3 time zones
STUDENTS' INSTITUTIONS & LINGUISTICS DEGREE OFFERINGS	UCSB (2 students) • PWI with multiple Linguistics majors and minors HBCUs (8 students) • 3 universities, none with a Linguistics major or minor	Non-HBCUs (3 students) • 2 PWIs with Linguistics majors and minors • 1 PWI without a Linguistics major or minor HBCUs (5 students) • 4 universities, none with a Linguistics major or minor
STUDENTS' MAJORS & MINORS	Anthropology Education English Language, Culture, and Society Mass Communication Mathematics Political Science Psychology Spanish Theater	Africana Studies English Communication Disorders Linguistics Political Science Speech and Hearing Sciences Spanish Theater and Performance

TABLE 1. Comparison of course structure and student participants in year 1 and year 2.

	COURSE ROLE(S)	INSTITUTIONAL POSITION AND AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION
CALHOUN	Lead instructor (years 1 and 2)	Graduate student in Linguistics Sociocultural linguistics (race, power, media)
CHARITY HUDLEY	Teaching Assistant (year 1) Faculty mentor to student teaching team (years 1 and 2)	Professor of Linguistics Sociolinguistics (African American language and culture, educational linguistics, community-based research)
BUCHOLTZ	Teaching Assistant (year 1) Faculty mentor to student teaching team (years 1 and 2)	Professor of Linguistics Sociocultural linguistics (race, gender, identity)
EXFORD	Teaching Assistant (year 2)	Graduate student in Linguistics Sociocultural linguistics (language contact, Caribbean Spanish, media)
JOHNSON	Undergraduate peer mentor (year 1)	Fourth-year undergraduate student Political Science major with Sociocultural Linguistics minor

TABLE 2. Summary of faculty, graduate student, and peer mentor roles at UCSB.

**5.1. COURSE STRUCTURE AND FORMAT.** Calhoun, who was a fourth-year linguistics Ph.D. student when the program began, served as the instructor of record for the course in Winter 2018 (year 1) and 2019 (year 2). She led the redesign of UCSB’s introductory

linguistics course (Linguistics 20: Languages and Linguistics) to focus on Black Studies while delivering introductory content that is important for all linguistics students. In year 1, she taught two lectures a week and met with students via Zoom for office hours and additional one-on-one sessions for extra support. She also attended Friday review sections and met weekly with Charity Hudley and Bucholtz—who served as teaching assistants (TAs)—in order to observe and discuss pedagogy and curriculum. As TAs, Charity Hudley and Bucholtz alternated teaching Friday sections and attending the twice-a-week lectures. They also held office hours and met with students via Zoom throughout the course. Johnson, a fourth-year undergraduate student at UCSB at the time, served as an undergraduate peer mentor. As peer mentor she attended lectures and section, held her own office hours, and met with the rest of the instructional team to discuss the course content and students' progress.

In year 2, due to the logistical difficulties of scheduling across three time zones, instruction was asynchronous. Calhoun recorded two video lectures per week and posted them online, and students were responsible for watching the videos and completing accompanying lecture guides on their own each week. Each student was assigned to a once-a-week synchronous review section led by Calhoun or Exford via Zoom. Exford, a second-year linguistics Ph.D. student, served as the teaching assistant and taught two of the three review sections each week (Calhoun taught the third). Both instructors held office hours with students and met with the faculty advisors throughout the course. These instructional models gave Calhoun the opportunity to learn how to teach in an interactive way with her graduate professors and then to pass that knowledge on to other graduate students. It also allowed Charity Hudley and Bucholtz to learn from the rest of the instructional team about program participants' interests and how to integrate these into the summer research program.

The primary text for the course was the second edition of *How languages work: An introduction to language and linguistics* (Genetti 2018), with additional readings drawn from *African American English: A linguistic introduction* (Green 2002), linguistic research articles, and language-related websites (see the annotated syllabus in the supplementary materials<sup>4</sup>). *How languages work*, jointly written by UCSB linguistics faculty and doctoral alumni, uses a functionalist and typological approach to explain linguistic phenomena: data examples were produced by language users in everyday interactions, and chapters typically begin with English examples followed by examples from languages around the world. The textbook follows a traditional introductory course model: language structure is introduced first (beginning with phonetics and ending with syntax), followed by discourse and prosody, then sociocultural linguistics, language change, contact, and acquisition. Calhoun reordered how subfields were introduced, teaching discourse first, followed by lexicon, morphology, syntax, phonetics, phonology, language variation and ideologies, and language change and contact (year 1 only).

Because the majority of the students enrolled in year 1 of the program had no prior exposure to linguistics and many students did not have extensive knowledge of a language other than English, Calhoun restructured the course and selected readings to have a stronger focus on English as a starting point for teaching about the various subfields. In year 2, in response to students' difficulty learning phonetics and the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) in year 1, phonetics was expanded from two to three weeks and the language change and contact lesson was removed in order to accommodate this

<sup>4</sup> Supplementary materials can be accessed at <http://muse.jhu.edu/resolve/116>.

adjustment. However, the students in year 2 had more familiarity with linguistics and with languages other than English than students in year 1, so more non-English examples were incorporated into course materials.

**5.2. INSTRUCTIONAL TEAM MEMBERS' REFLECTIONS ON THE COURSE.** Because the members of our instructional team varied in our institutional roles, educational backgrounds, teaching experiences, and personal backgrounds, we each engaged with the course and its students from different positionalities. We had strengths in different content areas and teaching skills, and personal experiences learning linguistic knowledge that shaped the ways we taught. This fostered a dynamic learning context for the instructors—particularly the graduate student instructors and peer mentor—as well as the students, and through it we were able to learn from each other and the program participants as we taught. Each year, we reflected on the course in both informal and formal ways throughout the quarter (e.g. discussing student performance during meetings, writing end-of-course reflections, reviewing student feedback), and excerpts from our reflections are included throughout the remainder of the article. In the following section, Calhoun, Exford, and Johnson reflect on their experiences as student members of the instructional team and how they approached their roles.

Although this was not her first time teaching as the instructor of record, teaching in the UCSB-HBCU program was Calhoun's first time teaching UCSB's introductory linguistics course. Calhoun describes her approach to the course as follows:

Prior to teaching Linguistics 20, I was a teaching assistant for Linguistics and Black Studies courses. I was also a graduate student instructor for the UCSB SKILLS program [see Bucholtz, Casillas, & Lee 2016], in which I taught a dual-enrollment sociocultural linguistics course in a local high school with a large Latinx student population. Based on these teaching experiences and my own undergraduate experience taking introductory linguistics courses as an English and Psychology major, I wanted to take advantage of this opportunity to redesign aspects of UCSB's course that seemed to give students the most trouble. This included the apparent disconnect between the concepts covered in the course, the languages used as examples, and students' familiarity or interest in them.

My own introduction to linguistics as an undergraduate at University of South Carolina was through analysis of English and a language and culture framework. The first linguistics courses I took were The English Language and Language and Society, and they taught me about aspects of language I had always been interested in but never knew were studied scientifically, as well as novel linguistic information. The applicability of linguistic knowledge and skills to my own life were not difficult to see—for example, why I, as a Black non-Southerner, had particular beliefs about Southern American English, or why Black Southerners made assumptions about me based on my Western Pennsylvania variety. This inspired me to learn more about language from other disciplinary perspectives (e.g. cognitive psychology) and more about linguistics as a field of study.

By the time I took the equivalent of Linguistics 20 in my fourth year, I knew I had a passion for linguistics. I had always loved language and was excited about this new approach to studying it, and this passion for the subject is what helped me as I struggled through my weaker areas like phonetics and phonology. I knew I wasn't memorizing IPA symbols and terminology just for the sake of it and that learning this content was part of building a foundation for continuing in linguistics study and research. Also, crucially, there was no pressure to commit every detail I learned to memory in order to pass future linguistics classes—partly because of when I took the course and partly because of its structure as a survey course. I wanted to bring to Linguistics 20 my passion for the subject and its connections to the world outside of the classroom—and outside of the (often narrowly conceived) field of linguistics.

Exford describes her undergraduate experience in linguistics and how it informed her decisions as a teaching assistant for the course as follows:

As an undergraduate, I studied linguistics and Spanish at the University of California, Riverside. My linguistics program had a generativist framework and I was one of two Black students in the department at the time. Although I enjoyed parts of my program, we rarely discussed the impacts of societal constructs or cultural practices on language structure. We almost never had the option to bring our own linguistic

and cultural experiences to the classroom, and we generally lacked the guidance to understand the ways in which linguistic concepts were applicable to our own lives and future goals. I have come to understand that all of these elements that I lacked in my undergraduate linguistics program were the things I initially thought I could demand from linguistics upon declaring the major. However, in the process of exploring sociolinguistic literature while doing undergraduate research in Puerto Rico, I was amazed with the possibilities I had in linguistics and the tools I had to explore issues relevant to my life and community. For that reason, I decided to pursue a Ph.D. in sociocultural linguistics, focusing on the relationships between language and identity (particularly English-speaking and Spanish-speaking Black diasporic identities) through written online modalities as well as within second language learning contexts. As an English-speaking Black American who has learned Spanish as a second language, I keep my personal and academic experiences in mind while being a teaching assistant in linguistics at an R1 university as well as a research mentor to undergraduate students of color in linguistics and related fields.

As a teaching assistant for this course, I was adamant about reflecting on my background in linguistics as well as my values of centering communities of color in linguistics courses; my goal is to show students of color that they have something useful to give and get from this discipline. Because I strive to build educational opportunities between Black diasporic communities throughout the Americas, I decided to incorporate the linguistic practices of Spanish-speaking Black diasporic communities in my activities as well. This included drawing from current popular culture, such as the music and interviews of Dominican-American trap artist Cardi B, who is popular in both Spanish-speaking and English-speaking Black communities. Students who had taken Spanish linguistics, literature, and/or culture courses described similar issues of representation at their respective institutions—in other words, there is an immense lack of representation of Afro-Latinx linguistic and cultural practices in these courses to the point of erasure. Therefore, in my weekly sections we incorporated examples from underrepresented and stigmatized Spanish dialects that tend to be from Afro-Caribbean communities into our discussion of linguistic concepts including phonetics, phonology, morphosyntax, and discourse. Overall, I was able to use my own research interests and community goals effectively to expose students to diverse linguistic structures that were relevant to their interests while centering diasporic Black communities.

Johnson reflected on how her experience participating in the course compared to her prior experience taking introductory linguistics:

Being a peer mentor was a nurturing and educational experience. During this course I was given the opportunity to join lectures to work on my own knowledge of linguistics, as well as find lecture material for [Calhoun], hold my own office hours, and interact individually with the students in and outside of the online course. The most enjoyable part of the course was having the ability to see myself in the students that I observed. I took Linguistics 20 at UCSB in Spring 2016. It was in a traditional classroom setting and it was taught by a white male professor. This was a difficult course for me for three reasons: (1) it was the first course I enrolled in to begin working on my newly petitioned-for minor, Sociocultural Linguistics, (2) it was difficult to remember certain concepts because I was unaware that scientific research went into the topic, since I had not known linguistics was a topic of study before enrolling in the course, and (3) it was difficult to see how this lecture material would relate back to my minor interests and ultimately to my everyday use in my career. By being a peer mentor for nine weeks, I was able to ‘retake’ this introductory course to linguistics, while also being able to view this information in a new light. It has allowed me to see how an Afrocentric twist can be placed on this field of study and in a few short weeks shown me how large a role socioeconomic, race, education, culture differences, and more can play in learning environments.

These reflections shed light on the value and impact of a Black-centered linguistics curriculum for instructors as well as students.

**6. REDESIGNING INTRODUCTION TO LINGUISTICS.** Teaching the introductory linguistics course in the context of the UCSB-HBCU Scholars in Linguistics Program required three major curricular redesigns: making the linguistics content more accessible to students with no prior knowledge of the discipline and potentially little to no exposure to a language other than English; centering Black language and culture; and adapting conventional methods of teaching linguistics to the Zoom video-conference medium, which at that time was not widely used for teaching, in ways that would be engaging and interactive. Table 3 summarizes these changes, and a discussion of each follows.

CURRICULUM REDESIGN OBJECTIVE	TYPES OF CHANGES	EXAMPLES FROM THE COURSE
Make linguistics more accessible to students who are new to language study.	Make English the primary language of analysis. Make familiar languages secondary languages of analysis.	Syntax unit: Focus on English word classes and constituent structure with a few comparative examples from widely spoken Indo-European languages (e.g. Spanish, French) (Fig. 1). Language change and contact unit: Focus on changes that occurred in US English.
Center Black language and culture.	Use linguistic data from Black English and examples from Black popular culture.	Use of GIFs of Black actors to demonstrate embodiment as part of the larger communicative system of which language is a part (Fig. 2). Creation of IPA word lists that include Black English features and examples from the film <i>Black Panther</i> (Fig. 3). Practice the IPA by ‘translating’ lyrics of British comedian Michael Dapaah’s hip-hop song ‘Man’s not hot’.
Make the online medium engaging and interactive.	Design activities for individual or whole-class work. Use Zoom shared screen, annotation, and chat options for multimedia and student input. Make lessons conceptual and discussion-based, scaffolded with frequent examples and exercises. Comprehensive and engaging lecture slides using color, font, and other visual cues to demonstrate concepts.	Interactive student use of Zoom annotation tool to circle the correct IPA symbol for the consonant sound produced by the instructor (Fig. 4). Color-coding of English sentences based on constituent structure; multi-colored syntax trees (Fig. 5).

TABLE 3. Summary of changes to the introductory linguistics course.

**6.1. MAKING INTRODUCTORY LINGUISTICS ACCESSIBLE.** As noted above, linguistics at UCSB is grounded in a typological perspective: language data presented in class lectures and assignments are drawn from all parts of the world to demonstrate linguistic patterns and unique linguistic features. For students already interested in linguistics, students who have grown up in multilingual homes or communities (as many UCSB students have), or students who have had the opportunity to learn a second language in school, this is likely less daunting as a component of the course. However, for students with no prior exposure to linguistics, students who have grown up in monolingual or English-dominant homes, or students who have had little opportunity to learn a new language (the process of which teaches basic skills of language analysis), the prospect of learning a new discipline through unfamiliar languages can be intimidating. Compared to their white counterparts, African American students have historically had less exposure to other languages as a result of educational and financial disparities (e.g. inability to afford study-abroad or summer language programs; Hubbard 2014), and therefore are more likely to be at a linguistic disadvantage in this context. The conventional course and textbook are structured to use English as a first introduction to linguistic concepts, which are then expanded on through analysis of other languages;

depending on students' experiences in high school or college English, writing, or language arts courses, however, their knowledge of English language structure varies. Some concepts that are typically treated as review in the course (e.g. English word classes) may be new to some students. This issue was confirmed by our discussions with Black UCSB linguistics students who had taken UCSB's conventional introductory course. One such student, Kamrynn, shared the following about her Linguistics 20 experience:

[It should have included] more of the social and cultural aspects of language and linguistics. I feel that that would make the class more intriguing for people who had never taken a linguistics course before. If I had started off taking LING 20 as my first linguistics course, I probably would not have been as interested in linguistics or would not have looked into enrolling in more LING classes. ... I'd prefer most topics be introduced first in English and to be given more examples in English before moving forward to other languages. Some topics were often introduced with an example from another language, but I feel that if I were able to comprehend a topic first in my native language, it would be easier to move forward with examples from different languages.

Calhoun's initial intent when adapting the course in year 1 was to follow the textbook's structure, but it quickly became apparent that the curriculum would need to be adjusted to use English as the primary rather than introductory language of analysis (cf. Loosen 2014's discussion of deviating from classroom texts for student accessibility). Although several students in the class knew other languages through classes, media, or family background (e.g. Spanish, Japanese, Korean, Amharic), using English as the primary language for illustration of linguistic concepts made the class more equitable for students who did not (Figure 1).

## Noun phrase

- Fixed ordering: within a noun phrase, words are ordered according to category
  - You cannot move words around within a NP, but you can move the NP within a sentence (i.e., the NP is a single grammatical unit)
- In English: (DET) (QUANT) (NUM) (ADJ\*) N (PP\*) (REL)

These are [the five best tricks for healthy skin that people love]

(DET) (NUM) (ADJ) N (PP) (REL)

FIGURE 1. Example from a syntax lesson using data from an English-language skin care article.

In both years, students' home languages and varieties, along with nonheritage languages of interest, were incorporated into the content to drive home the point that English has many varieties and is only one language out of thousands in the world; comparison between varieties of English and between English and other languages was frequent. While less commonly taught languages that are usually part of Linguistics 20 at UCSB were not actively analyzed in the class, students learned about many languages through the textbook and through supplemental resources provided by the instructors to individual students who expressed interest.

**6.2. CENTERING BLACK LANGUAGE AND CULTURE.** Rather than teaching sociolinguistic variation as a separate unit within the course, Calhoun incorporated sociocultural influences on language practices into all aspects of the course by analyzing Black

language and culture in each week's lessons. This included structural features of Black English and the use of popular Black expressions and interactional styles as well as data drawn from Black film and television characters, music, social media personae and posts (e.g. memes, GIFs), and students' personal interests. For example, the second unit of the course, discourse and embodiment, used reaction GIFs with Black actors and celebrities to illustrate different types of embodiment and the role it plays in interpreting ambiguous language such as *Girl, you play too much*—an example that also includes Black English features (Figure 2).<sup>5</sup>

## HOW CAN EMBODIMENT CHANGE THE MEANING OF LANGUAGE?

The additional information provided by embodied action is the type of contextual information that can change the meaning of language (cf. pitch)

Speaker: "Girl, you play too much"




When spoken and embodied meaning contradict each other, it can cause confusion

- Say "turn right" but point to the left

FIGURE 2. Example from a lesson using GIFs of Black women to demonstrate embodiment.

Although the course largely focused on Black language and culture in the US, we understand Blackness as a diasporic and varied identity. Between Calhoun, Charity Hudley, Exford, Johnson, and the students in the course, a range of Black cultural backgrounds and experiences were represented. Several students were of Caribbean heritage, several were children of immigrants from across the Black diaspora, and the students and instructors came from various home states within the US, including the South, the East, and the West. Students were encouraged to bring their personal, familial, and community practices and understandings of Black language and culture to the class to enrich discussions.

Calhoun incorporated contemporary Black popular culture into lecture content and assessments, both as examples of linguistic phenomena and as language data for analysis. In year 1, the lesson on the IPA occurred the week after Marvel's Black-themed blockbuster film *Black Panther* premiered in the US; to update the basic word lists usually provided to demonstrate IPA sounds, Calhoun included memorable words from the film (e.g. *Nakia*, *colonizer*) and words thematically related to it (e.g. *loyal*, *freedom*) (Figure 3).

Introduction to the IPA was through US English, taught in two parts: first consonants—to allow students to familiarize themselves with the symbols with less variation

<sup>5</sup> Within the scope of the course, the term *embodiment* (or *embodied action*) was used to refer to nonverbal forms of meaning and communication that are expressed via the human body. The lesson on embodiment focused on facial expression, gesture, and physical adornment, since those were forms of embodiment all students were familiar with. It also included a brief discussion of sign languages, especially Black ASL, as linguistic systems that are also forms of embodied communication. For a broader discussion of embodiment in sociocultural linguistics see, for example, Bucholtz & Hall 2016.



### North American English Vowels

Symbol	Example words
[i]	niece queen Nakia/Shuri
[ɪ]	big win Erik Killmonger
High, front vowels	
[u]	mood rude Bugatti
[ʊ]	book should good
High, back vowels	

FIGURE 3. IPA word lists based on the Marvel film *Black Panther*.

and to practice separating spelling and sound—and then vowels. For an IPA assessment that year, Calhoun used lyrics from the popular hip-hop song ‘Man’s not hot’ (2017) by London-based Black comedian Michael Dapaah as data to be ‘translated’ into IPA. Calhoun described the activity in this assignment as translation (rather than transcription) because the pedagogical goal was to reiterate that English orthography and IPA are two separate ways to represent speech—a parallel to prior class discussions about how different languages can be used to express the same idea and how one language can be translated into another. The task involved broad IPA transcription: students transcribed one set of selected words from the lyrics as they would pronounce them in their own variety of English and then transcribed a second set of selected words as Dapaah pronounces them in the song. Because they were working from written lyrics, framing the activity as ‘translating’ the specified words from the provided English spelling into IPA symbols was a reminder that what students would write would not look the same as the English words, even if some individual IPA symbols resemble graphemes used in English orthography. The two parts of the assignment were complementary, highlighting variation in pronunciation first among Black speakers of US English and then between US and UK varieties of Black English. In this way, the assignment reiterated the practical and conceptual significance of the IPA for capturing linguistic variation.

**6.3. DYNAMIC AND INTERACTIVE ONLINE TEACHING.** The largest practical pedagogical change to the course was teaching via the video-conference platform Zoom rather than in a face-to-face classroom setting. Traditional methods of teaching linguistic concepts and practicing them through application (e.g. students working through a problem set in small groups) were not feasible through this medium given constraints of time, technology, and students’ linguistic knowledge. For instance, not all students were visible at the same time when PowerPoint slides were shared on screen. Because the instructors could not check individual students’ understanding in real time and the class was too small to benefit from Zoom’s breakout tool for small-group work, lessons and activities had to be designed for either individual or whole-class work and discussion rather than think-pair-share or hands-on collective activities. Visually, Zoom offers options for screen-sharing, so everyone could view PowerPoint slides, videos, and other media in real time; it also offers annotation and chat options, so students could write on the shared screen or contribute to the discussion quickly via text if they preferred (Figure 4).

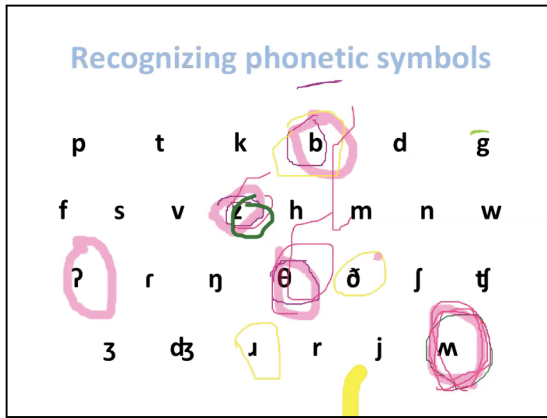


FIGURE 4. Friday section exercise on IPA consonants using the Zoom annotation tool.

Working with these affordances, Calhoun structured class sessions to be more conceptual, scaffolded, and discussion-based, with frequent use of examples, illustrations, and requests for student input, such as by asking for additional examples, in order to progress through topics as a group. Assignments were designed to give students more traditional hands-on practice applying concepts in a variety of ways and analyzing language data.

Through this structure, students were able to participate in synchronous peer learning by hearing and seeing other students' questions and comments as well as instructor-led learning online in combination with asynchronous synthesis of course materials (e.g. reading and lecture notes, assignments) and interaction with instructors outside of class (cf. Reaser 2016, Riha et al. 2010). In year 2, when students watched lecture videos independently in a flipped-classroom model (Milman 2014), lessons were scaffolded using lecture guides with check-your-understanding exercises for students to complete as they progressed through the lesson. Exercises were placed at points in the lecture when in a synchronous setting Calhoun would have posed a discussion question or had the class complete the exercise as a group.

Clear and visually engaging lecture slides were particularly important to compensate for the limited options for extemporaneous creative explanation. During the syntax unit, for example, using different colors to indicate constituents in a sentence helped students to recognize boundaries between constituents and understand how those groupings are represented in a tree diagram (Figure 5).

Although Calhoun could not easily erase and redraw objects as an instructor can on a board in a classroom, annotation allowed for drawing circles or arrows, underlining, or adding text notes to slides in the moment. Additionally, if the audio connection was poor due to a weak internet connection or background noise—as was often the case—students could still see the key information on the slide.

Due to the differing modalities of in-class and independent learning, online and offline activities had to be designed to supplement each other bidirectionally: students needed to be able to apply what happened in the online class or lecture video to offline assessments and their daily experiences, and they were encouraged to share in the online class what they had learned through the offline assessments. Rather than using language data sets for each unit, assignment formats varied and aimed to generate student excitement and foster a dynamic and interactive online classroom environment. For ex-

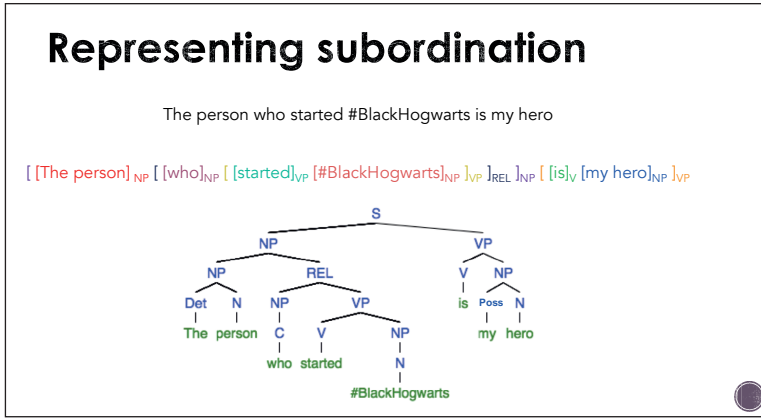


FIGURE 5. Example from a lesson using color and a tree diagram to visualize English constituent structure in a tweet.

ample, during the lexicon and word-classes unit in year 1, Calhoun assigned students the task of creating their own lists of words from different lexical categories in any language they knew. Although all students chose to complete the assignment using English words, it gave students who knew other languages the opportunity to bring that knowledge into the class. Calhoun used words that students included in their lists as examples in lecture the following day, which provided opportunities for students to lead parts of the class discussion.

**7. ASSESSING COURSE STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS.** In order to revise and further develop the course during each year of the program, we requested formative evaluation from students regarding course teaching strategies and content and what they would recommend for the future. Because the number of participants was small and students had widely varied linguistics backgrounds in both years, we focused on qualitative over quantitative feedback. The following sections combine reflections from the instructional team with students' evaluative feedback.<sup>6</sup>

**7.1. STRENGTHS.** An overall strength of the course was the ability to engage online with students who would otherwise not have access to linguistics content. Students felt prepared to engage further in linguistics because the course linked to their own culturally familiar funds of knowledge (González, Moll, & Amanti 2005) while providing an overview of linguistics that was global in scope. Based on students' feedback and instructors' observations, the most engaging linguistic topics in the course were language variation, language attitudes and ideologies, and phonetics and phonology. Another strength of the course was the interactive and discussion-based learning via Zoom.

Charity Hudley reported that learning about how pidgins and creoles along with Black English make up the diaspora of African heritage languages and language varieties was an especially engaging lesson in year 1:

Many of the students in the course were from Caribbean backgrounds, so when I taught this part of the course, students started speaking in their various creoles. It was amazing and that interaction could have only happened across schools like that online. Students were also really interested in the notion of these varieties as languages—not just broken English or dialects. They wanted to really think about how to spread that message to others.

<sup>6</sup> All student quotations in the following sections are included with written consent. Students were required to submit feedback as part of the course, but some chose not to have their comments published.

Student peer mentor Johnson noted, ‘the entire concept of Zoom helped to keep me engaged in the class. It has many functions that allowed for everyone to be interactive and communicate. I enjoyed the [PowerPoint slides] versus having a lecture with a whiteboard as I assumed that was how the setup would be’. Johnson believed that the units on discourse, IPA, and language variation and ideologies engaged students the most:

This estimate is based off of the growth in questions during that lecture, as well as seeing the students smiling and enjoying some interactive activities through Zoom ... [T]he IPA seemed to be particularly engaging to the students; this lecture included interactive charts where they were able to quiz one another on the phonetic alphabet, as well as learn how to draw the symbols in question. During the discourse lecture the students were full of questions and engaged with what was being taught by Kendra, especially when the topics like ‘positive roasts’ were brought up and they could give personal examples or [they had] interest in a new topic they had not acknowledged before, like Black [American Sign Language].<sup>7</sup>

The use of media such as music, videos, and social media posts was a central aspect of Calhoun’s teaching style that students responded to positively, and many of the examples came from students’ direct requests or from topics mentioned during lecture discussions. Technology and media are well documented as effective tools that can inspire pedagogical innovations to address ever-changing student, faculty, and institutional needs (e.g. Inside Higher Ed 2017), and in sociolinguistically oriented courses specifically, social media are important sources of linguistic data that demonstrate phenomena such as dialectal variation, online-specific linguistic features, and change in real time (e.g. Becker 2014, Kemp et al. 2016, Squires & Queen 2011, Wagner 2014). Table 4 summarizes student feedback on the strengths of the course.

COURSE STRENGTHS	STUDENT FEEDBACK
Incorporation of contemporary (Black) popular culture; use of media	What I appreciated most during this course was the inclusion of [relevant] Twitter posts, Vine videos, and trending topics ... in our learning material. It always kept me interested and able to understand what we were learning. (Summer-Anne, year 1)
Culturally familiar and global in scope	Linguistic stereotypes and language variation was a great topic ... because it allowed us as students to see what stereotypes are common across the world. (Tony Hawks, year 1)
Relevance to everyday life and cultural experiences; centering Black language and culture	I want to say that maybe all of the material related to my socio-cultural identity! This is so important because I tend to disassociate or disengage with content I find mundane and/or foreign to my everyday experience. (Dominique Cassamajor, year 2) The concepts that engaged me the most were the ones that tied back explicitly to AAVE. In the past, I have taken ‘Introduction to Linguistics’ and ‘African American Vernacular English’ separately, but to see them working seamlessly together was a new experience. For example, during the Phonetics unit, we were asked to give examples of words from our own regional variations of AAVE that contained the indicated sounds. It is rare in academia that I am asked to present my own life experiences (especially those pertaining to my Blackness), so to do so in this course was deeply validating. (Mea Anderson, year 2)

(TABLE 4. *Continues*)

<sup>7</sup> One of the discourse lessons in year 1 focused on African American discourse genres, including the ritual insult genre of roasts, which Calhoun described as a variation of the dozens (see e.g. Smitherman 1977 for a description of the dozens). One set of examples that the class discussed was social media posts in which two Black men using images of Black male celebrities as proxies ‘insulted’ each other for what could be seen as positive characteristics, such as using romantic language. This led to a debate about whether ‘positive roasts’ occur—playfully using the discourse features of insult to praise someone’s good characteristics—or if the point of these posts was to frame these characteristics as insult-worthy.

COURSE STRENGTHS	STUDENT FEEDBACK
	Having taken a lot of prior linguistics courses, the structure usually focuses on the standard and then Black people and speech as a deviant from this standard. This was the first time I took a class where that structure was flipped, with Black people as the center and then everyone else ... I [loved] this class because in every example there was an aspect of Black culture, which is not something you're gonna find anywhere else, unfortunately. (Ericka Canon, year 2)
Language variation, attitudes, and ideologies	One of the things I have learned is that I do not speak incorrectly when I use AAE [African American English]. In fact, I am just following the rules that come with the language variety. I also learned the term 'AAE'; previously, I would refer to the language variety that I speak as African American Vernacular English. (Asha Fola-Whigham, year 1) [An] aspect of the course that engaged me was language variation and ideologies because while engaged in [this] course, I was hyper-aware of my geographical location, voice, and any possible perceptions that are associated with living in such an area. (Jonathan Johnson, year 2)
Phonetics and phonology	I feel as if the phonological variation component of the course engaged the students the most. We really enjoyed discussing differences we have noticed in speech pronunciations of our own and others. Classes were filled with giggles and playful debates on how words 'should be pronounced.' (Myaah Hayes, year 1)

TABLE 4. Student feedback on the strengths of the course.

**7.2. DIFFICULT ASPECTS OF THE COURSE.** In addition to being one of the most engaging topics, phonetics was also one of the most challenging units in the course for students conceptually and pedagogically in year 1. There was no opportunity for in-person instruction or working in small groups, and any technological problems that reduced the quality of the audio hindered instructors' ability to hear the sounds that students produced and vice versa. In year 2, more students had prior experience with phonetics and the length of the unit was also extended, so it was a less challenging part of the course overall. Syntax, however, proved to be a particularly difficult subject in year 2. Learning linguistic terminology was also a challenge, especially for students with little experience with language study. The difficulties of the course were exacerbated by the difference in pace between a fifteen-week semester course and a ten-week quarter course. Each subfield is covered in one week, with two lectures, one review section, and one assignment per topic. The pace of the introductory course is difficult even for UCSB students who are accustomed to the ten-week quarter; for students accustomed to a semester system, this meant five fewer weeks than usual to consolidate information, review, and ask questions. The course was even shorter than usual in year 1 because the quarter was reduced to nine weeks of instruction due to the impact of wildfires near Santa Barbara. There were also more limited opportunities for synchronous interaction in year 2, which was a disadvantage relative to the all-synchronous class meetings in year 1.

Johnson agreed that, from her perspective, phonetics was particularly challenging for students:

I think the concepts taught in the course outside of the realm of traditional introductory linguistic courses were easily grasped because the students could talk them through and were given good examples of the concepts by Kendra, Professor Bucholtz, and Professor Charity Hudley. But, as linguistic concepts took the focus of the entire course, I believe that although interactive and exciting to learn, the eagerness of the students to fully grasp these concepts lowered. For example, the IPA chart symbols confused some students, and when only listening to the sounds they had trouble remembering which symbol matched to it. These issues were ones I faced as well in my introductory linguistics course at UCSB, but I feel like in this particular case, the sudden shift into this piece of learning was abrupt for the students and could

be correlated to their drop in excitement—until they began to grasp the concepts a little better through homework practice.

In Charity Hudley’s experience, this difficulty with the IPA was not unusual:

From my years teaching Southern Black students in Virginia, I anticipated that learning the IPA might be hard for them as it was for me. I’d failed my first IPA assignment because I used Southern vowels, not Boston ones, but when I met with my TA, she saw that I’d done it just fine. In addition, as a variationist, I don’t often use the IPA in my work because of these types of issues. Once we discovered that learning the IPA was particularly hard online, we had one-on-one sessions with students who needed extra support. Using an IPA chart with sound helped students anchor their varieties onto written words and the IPA system.

Table 5 summarizes student feedback on the most difficult aspects of the course.

DIFFICULT ASPECTS OF THE COURSE	STUDENT FEEDBACK
Phonetics and phonology (year 1)	<p>The concepts that engaged the students the most were the IPA charts. We as a group enjoyed learning and trying to figure out what the different symbols sound like. Although the IPA was the most engaging of the concepts, it was also the most challenging of the concepts to learn and master. (Asha Fola-Whigham, year 1)</p> <p>The Phonetics and Phonology portion of the course was a challenge [to] a good amount of the students ... The hardest part for me was pinpointing the correct sound for each word. Some of us lived in a lot of different states growing up, so I was not sure which pronunciations to follow. (Tony Hawks, year 1)</p>
Syntax (year 2)	<p>The most challenging thing for me to pick up in this course is syntax, simply because syntax is a difficult subject to master. Syntax, I believe, is such a wide topic with much variation to cover compared to phonetics, and I feel like if I had more time to learn about syntax that I could have better grasped the information that was given to me. (Christopher Holt, year 2)</p> <p>I struggled the most with syntax. I have always struggled with sentence structure. This course gave me a better understanding in this area, but it is something that I will just have to continue to work on. (SS, year 2)</p>
Linguistic terminology	<p>There were more things in the class [in addition to syntax] that were difficult due to the rapid pace, terminology, and online aspect. (Jonathan Johnson, year 2)</p>
Length of the course	<p>Since the course had a scheduling change for the term, there was not as much time to go into such complex topics. Also, I believe that since the course focused more on abstract ideas than mechanical structure, once we got to the mechanics of language it was a bit intimidating. (Myaah Hayes, year 1)</p>
Online-only instruction	<p>These concepts would have been easier to grasp if it was a face-to-face class. Nonetheless, the instructors were very patient and supportive throughout this process, which made the situation a much more positive/stimulating environment. (Myaah Hayes, year 1)</p> <p>It would be nice if there could be a way for students to interact more with each other in section or with coursework because, while section was beneficial academically, I left feeling as though I still didn’t know the students in my section, let alone in the rest of the cohort. (Mea Anderson, year 2)</p> <p>LING 20 could provide a more immersive opportunity for students. I do agree that the Zoom [section] meetings were useful in providing live feedback and assistance from a graduate student, however it really just seemed like there should be a lot more opportunities for students to, not only ask questions, but for students to interact with faculty in order to ensure that the information provided within the course is better understood by the students. (Christopher Holt, year 2)</p>

TABLE 5. Student feedback on difficult aspects of the course.

**7.3. OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT.** Particularly in year 1, time constraints limited how much of the course could be devoted to Black English as its own topic of study. Although Black language and culture were incorporated into every week's lessons, we were unable to discuss variation within Black English as much as many of the students would have liked. Dialectal variation among the students and instructors created opportunities to discuss regional variation in Black English during lectures, but issues such as gender- or class-based variation or different diasporic communities' attitudes toward US Black English were less discussed. Johnson commented:

If there was more time, I would have added in more information about African American English since some of the students speak it and/or have a southern accent which have stigmas to them, especially at a PWI. These students will be coming to UCSB in the summer—where American Standard English is strongly followed both in [the student area near campus] and academically on campus—and it would be great to show the positive [sense] of community AAE gives to the small community of Black students at UCSB.

Johnson also recommended that the peer mentor role be expanded:

From the perspective of a peer mentor, I feel as though it would be great to continue having one for the course but have them be more interactive in the class and with the students. Looking back at my time in the course, I wish I had more contact with the students to give more advice or information about UCSB and my experiences here as a Black student. I also feel that being more available to have the students ask questions about lecture would have been helpful to practice my knowledge about linguistics and would be another example of Black students in this field of study.

We struggled to balance students' interest in Black English with the need to provide tools to understand the material and the context. Moreover, in order to accommodate highly scaffolded lessons on linguistic structure, some subfields and topics that students were interested in were not covered in the course (e.g. Black children's language acquisition, maintenance of African diaspora languages). Students had opportunities to work with graduate and faculty mentors to explore these topics during the summer, but their absence from the introductory course was a disappointment to some. Student feedback on areas for improvement of the course are summarized in Table 6.

AREAS WITH OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT	STUDENT FEEDBACK
Increase discussion of AAE and African diaspora languages	I would have liked to have spent more time studying African American English and its varieties. It is a really interesting topic because of the history and grammar. (Asha Fola-Whigham, year 1)
Discussion of additional subfields, methodology, application	I wish we would have had more time to incorporate more linguistic translation of other languages to compare similarities between Standard English and other languages. (Summer-Anne, year 1) It's my belief that [examples of research methodologies in each lesson] would show the pragmatism of the concept(s), which would maybe yield an even greater understanding of the material. (Dominique Cassamajor, year 2) I would include more conversations about the realization of Linguistic subfields in signed languages, whether it be Black American Sign Language or otherwise. (Mea Anderson, year 2)

TABLE 6. Student feedback on areas of improvement for the course.

After year 1, the instructional team reflected on logistical and structural aspects of the course that could be improved. One logistical problem that could not be easily solved—and actually worsened in year 2—was scheduling conflicts. Because students' spring semester schedules filled up quickly and did not align neatly with UCSB's quar-

ter system, and because students and instructors were in multiple time zones, there were few, if any, windows of time when all students could meet for lectures and section. The flipped-classroom model in year 2 was used primarily due to these scheduling conflicts.

We continue to draw on student feedback and instructor experiences to improve the course for future years. During year 2, Calhoun taught at one of our partner HBCUs, Virginia State University, and had the opportunity to observe and teach in a Black-centered, teaching-focused, highly supportive educational model. Her experiences of teaching an English linguistics course, interacting with students from different backgrounds than the average UCSB student, and learning more about the teaching styles of HBCU faculty will inform future iterations of the course. With greater firsthand knowledge of the types of academic environments that future program participants will be coming from, we can better tailor both the introductory linguistics course and the summer research program to meet students where they are and help them progress toward their goals.

Johnson's reflection at the end of her experience as the course's peer mentor in year 1 sums up the impact of such work:

During the last week of the course I was asked, 'What does a Black student at UC Santa Barbara need to know about AAE or Black language and culture [see Charity Hudley et al. 2022]?' My first thought went to the Linguistics 20 online course because I know that having an Afrocentric introductory linguistics course would have had a large impact on my mindset, my enjoyment of the topics, and also on what I would have researched during my senior year at UC Santa Barbara. As we developed this course online, I believe that a newfound educational interest may have taken place due to the representation of two Black professors in this field of study, and by having a course catered to [Black students] and for them. ... Having the ability to learn more about my Black community while at a PWI by a professor of color is extraordinary, and this led to my next suggestion of what Black students should know. They should know that they have the ability to expand and show their presence at this university, even if it is a PWI. I believe that Black students on this campus need to know that they have professors on this campus who look like them and will work with them, while also finding a way to represent Black students on this campus in more ways than weekly Tuesday meetings at [the Black Student Union].

It was not until my junior year that I came into contact with a Black professor on this campus and if it was not for being on the track and field team I am unsure of how many Black friends I would have here. This class has had a tremendous impact on my educational experience and after I graduate next quarter, I will be pursuing a Master's in Education at University of Southern California to work on education policies to ensure experiences like these can take place. As a soon-to-be alumna, I feel that Black students need to know that there are classes like Linguistics 20, activities, and groups that they can participate in to discuss topics that matter to them with people who look like them, and that they have the ability to show their culture through dress, music, and even AAE on this campus.

**8. CONCLUSION.** Through the intentional redesigns of content and structure detailed in this article, we strived to make our introductory linguistics course more accessible and equitable to Black students as part of a larger effort to make linguistics a more racially inclusive field. Although the course described here was created specifically for the UCSB-HBCU Scholars in Linguistics Program, many aspects of the model can be replicated in both in-person and online synchronous and asynchronous formats—namely, centering Black language and culture throughout the course and tailoring the content to the knowledge, interests, and educational experiences of the students in the class. Redesigning typical introductory linguistics assignments was one aspect of our model, and the supplementary materials to this article further detail Calhoun's approach to doing so for our course. The sample assignments can be adapted to fit the specific classroom, departmental, and temporal contexts of an introductory course; however, changes to assignments must be part of a broader, reflexive assessment of whether the structures and content of the course (e.g. subfields taught, order of teaching, data and



examples included) are accessible for Black students from varied linguistic, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds.

When we taught this course, none of us were formally trained in online pedagogy, and Linguistics 20 had not been taught online at UCSB before. Calhoun adapted the course content to an online format in year 1 to the best of her abilities, and the instructional team knew that we would need to be open to adjustments as the course progressed that year and in future iterations. The instructional team members learned from one another's respective approaches to teaching introductory content and from the students in the course, who helped us to recognize and address unanticipated curricular and technological challenges. Over the two years of the course that we have described, we encountered issues that now have been brought to the forefront nationally in light of the shift to remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic: not all students had access to reliable internet, students sometimes had to phone in to class, thereby missing the visual component of the slides, and some students viewed the lessons on their phone (which limited their ability to participate in some activities). Black, Brown, and lower-income students disproportionately face structural conditions that impact their ability to fully participate in online courses (e.g. Fischer 2020). Thus, as we work to make linguistics accessible and attractive to Black students, we must be cognizant of both the content structure and, in the case of online courses, the technological structures that make our teaching inclusive of Black students' experiences.

Although online teaching has its limitations, this format allowed us to bring together Black undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty from multiple institutions to teach and learn together. We were able to ensure that all students participating in the program had access to the same foundational linguistic knowledge regardless of their home institution or academic major. For HBCU students, in particular, the online format provided access to linguistic course content that they often did not have access to at their home institution, since no HBCU offers linguistics as a major or minor. As we have discussed throughout this article, Black students are not underrepresented in linguistics because they are uninterested in language and language-related phenomena; rather, structural barriers consistently prevent Black students from accessing linguistics content and push out most of the Black students who do find their way to the field. Many students who participated in the UCSB-HBCU Scholars in Linguistics Program have found their academic homes in disciplines that are closely aligned with linguistics but have better demonstrated the cultural relevance and career opportunities available to Black students who engage with language (e.g. speech-language pathology, communication sciences and disorders, education, psychology). The introductory linguistics course described in this article is structured to demonstrate to Black students how linguistics can enrich their existing language-related interests and career goals. The course continued in its online format in the third year of the research program with a new cohort of undergraduate students from institutions across the country. Jamaal Muwwakkil and deandre miles-hercules, both graduate students in linguistics at UCSB, were the graduate instructors for year 3, and they built on the models of the first two years while incorporating their unique perspectives and research experiences into the course content and structure.

For our efforts at racial equity and inclusion in linguistics to be effective, this must be a discipline-wide effort. The model of online teaching that we have described is one that can be replicated by other linguistics departments and programs to serve their own Black students as well as Black students at other institutions, even if individual instructors in the home department do not, as we did, have the benefit of external funding. Colleges and universities that offer linguistics courses and have physical proximity to

HBCUs are particularly well situated to establish linguistics partnerships that serve Black students. Many universities' online and extension programs allow students from other schools to enroll in classes, and creating a partnership with an HBCU can lead to funding or other support to help build course infrastructure. We encourage others to use this article as a resource as college and university instructors confront both the ongoing pandemic and the continued struggle for Black justice in higher education, especially in linguistics. We call on our linguistics colleagues to join us in rethinking how linguistics is taught, for whom, and why, in order to ensure that our classrooms, whether physical or virtual, reflect the linguistic and cultural diversity that is at the core of our discipline.

## APPENDIX

Key changes to make an Introduction to Linguistics course inclusive of Black students in the US.

1. Make English the primary language for introducing, explaining, illustrating, and analyzing linguistic concepts.
  - a. Explicitly teach English language structure (particularly morphosyntax).
  - b. Make languages that are familiar to students in the course secondary languages of analysis.
  - c. Make less familiar languages of interest available through supplementary materials.
2. Incorporate Black language and culture throughout the course as lecture content, examples of linguistic phenomena, and language data for analysis.
  - a. Do not teach Black language only in a sociolinguistics or variation unit.
  - b. Teach features of Black language as examples of regular variation, not only exceptions to rules.
  - c. Incorporate Black popular culture as points of reference in lecture content (ask students for suggestions).
  - d. Encourage Black students to share their specific cultural backgrounds and experiences to reflect the diversity of Black culture, without singling out Black students as representatives of or ambassadors for Black language and culture.
3. Highly scaffolded, discussion-based lessons
  - a. Frequent examples, illustrations, and requests for student input
4. Different types of assessment
  - a. Do not use analysis of language data sets as the assessment for every concept; incorporate conceptual questions, media analysis, essays, and other types of assessment.
5. Make all modalities as accessible as possible, both in person and online.
  - a. Use visual cues such as text color and size, font, shapes, and images to demonstrate concepts and create engaging materials.
  - b. Provide transcripts and captions for audio and video data.
6. Emphasize the real-world relevance and career connections of linguistic concepts, questions, and tools in every lesson.

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